

83.a.25
2
Z O R A I D A:

A
T R A G E D Y. K-

AS IT IS ACTED AT THE
T H E A T R E - R O Y A L
I N
D R U R Y - L A N E.
TO WHICH IS ADDED A
P O S T S C R I P T,
C O N T A I N I N G
O B S E R V A T I O N S O N T R A G E D Y.

DESCRIPTAS SERVARE VICES

HOR. DE ART. POET.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED BY W. RICHARDSON, IN THE STRAND;
FOR G. KEARSLEY, N^o 46, FLEET-STREET.

M DCC LXXX.

NO. 1. A. D. 1841.

THE LANCET

THE LANCET

THE LANCET

TO WHICH IS ADDED A

POST OFFICE



—

OBSERVATIONS ON TRAGEDY.

THE LANCET

LONDON:

PRINTED BY W. RICHARDS, IN THE STREET,
FOR G. HENSLY, No. 1, FLEET-STREET.

M DCCC XLII.

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THE Tragedy here presented to the Public has no farther foundation on history, than that Selim I. one of the Ottoman emperors, besieged and subdued Cairo; by that event reducing Egypt under his dominion. The rest is invention.

When its author considers the combination of difficulties he has had to encounter, he must have an unpardonable share of vanity did he not feel, and were he not anxious to express, how much he owes to the good offices of all who have had any concern in the Piece.

To the Managers, therefore, for their care, judgment, and liberality, in getting it up; to Mr. Linley, and Mr. Louthembourg, for the display of their several well-known talents; and to all the performers, not only for their kind attention during the preparation of the Piece, but their exertions in representation, particularly to the zeal and abilities of Mrs. Yates, he thus publicly returns his sincere acknowledgements. To their united efforts he principally attributes the uniform, and constant applause, with which the Piece has been honoured in the theatre; for a bare enumeration of the variety of unfavourable circumstances which have attended its whole progress, will sufficiently prove that no Tragedy,

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produced within the present century, has had to contend with equal obstacles.

It is certain, whatever be the cause, that the current of public taste has of late run strongly in the channel of Comedy. Zoraida had not only, in common with other Tragedies, to oppose this current, but was the first to stem the torrent of ridicule with which the Critic has overwhelmed this portion of the drama; and that even while the impressions conveyed by this favourite burlesque were fresh, and strong, upon the minds of the audience. The time when the Piece, through unavoidable delays, was produced, was also an additional disadvantage to it; a fortnight before, and after, the holidays, being always esteemed the worst part of the season; and this disadvantage was increased by the indisposition of two of the principal performers; Mr. Palmer, and Mrs. Yates, being both so ill, during the three first nights, as to be scarce able to tread the stage.

But these are not the only difficulties Zoraida has had to combat.

When it is considered how many, professedly, form their judgments of theatrical performances from news-paper criticisms, and how many (who, if accused of it, would disdain the imputation, yet) are secretly influenced by them, the injury they may do a writer is easy to be conceived: for, if his reputation is not already sufficiently established to burst through the cloud in which their decisions, almost universally unfavourable, for a time involve it, he

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is inevitably precluded a fair hearing, at the tribunal of the Public, from the prejudices which, by this vehicle, are circulated against his Piece. The author of *Zoraida* is far from disputing either the candour or abilities of several of the editors of the daily prints; but (without hinting at the variety of causes which may influence and bias their judgment) when we know what difference of opinion, in matters of taste, prevails among persons of the most refined and improved judgment, even in works long submitted to the cool decision of the closet, it surely is not too much to say, that it is impossible for any set of men to decide fairly on the merits of any theatrical piece, merely from once hearing it; especially when the imperfection which necessarily attends a first night's performance is taken into the account. Of the truth of this remark, the opposite and irreconcilable criticisms which have been made upon *Zoraida*, are a most convincing proof.

In one print, the Piece has been described as an Oriental *Rhapsody* of forced, unnatural situations, conveyed in the baldest numbers that ever disgraced the tragic Muse. In another, as being a cold, regular French play, depending more on sentiment, and diction, than action, yet of classical purity. In one place, the plot has been represented as exhibiting various interesting changes of fortune; in another, as having a chilling sameness pervading every part of it. The language has been described as being flowery, incorrect, classical, elegant, bloated, and puerile; while the sentiments were now said to be libe-

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liberal, manly, and such as do honour to the writer; and now to be dull, trite, and to shew no knowledge of the human heart. Nay, the very words have been misquoted, and the author has been desired not to write nonsense, because the Critic, happening not to hear distinctly, mistook *Panoply* for *Canopy*.

To these vague and contradictory assertions, all the reply that becomes either the author's character, or the respect he bears the enlightened Public, is simply to elucidate his own ideas of the drama, and submit it to the impartial judgment of those who are competent to the question, to determine how far his opinions and practice will stand the test of true and candid criticism.

He has accordingly annexed a few pages of cursory remarks on the subject of Tragedy, by way of Postscript, and, having done this, means to take leave of the subject. Those Readers who are indifferent to discussions of this sort, may neglect these remarks as of no consequence.. Those who love, and are conversant with such kind of disquisitions, will, he hopes, find here and there a reflection not totally unworthy their attention. On their candour he relies, to excuse those inaccuracies which must of course attend any performance drawn up with the haste in which the greater part of these observations have been written. He means not to dogmatize, he pretends not to instruct; he only aims at expressing his manner of thinking with diffident simplicity. If his ideas are false, his opinions erroneous, he has only to say, that he shall be happy to be enlightened and corrected by more cultivated taste, more accurate

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rate judgment. Should that taste and judgment stamp a value on these few trivial remarks by their suffrage, all the pride it will excite in him will be that of endeavouring more truly to merit their approbation*.

* The sensible Arnaud observes—Parler de soi ennueie, et souvent revolte. S'entretenir sur son art avec le public connaisseur, avec cette portion d'hommes éclairés, qui seul assure le vrai succès, et indique les moyens de l'obtenir, c'est converser, s'instruire avec ses maîtres, et contribuer, autant qu'on le peut, à la perfection du talent.—Disc. Prelim. au *Drame du Comte de Cominges*.

PRO-

PROLOGUE,

By A. FRIEND,

As spoken by Mr. PALMER.

IN days long past, when every muse was young,
Persuasion dwelt on every poet's tongue;
By means most obvious were the passions rais'd,
And, pleas'd with novelty, the public prais'd.
Now, when Melpomene, from year to year,
Calls Terror forth, or draws Compassion's tear,
By plenty cloy'd, and difficult of choice,
Fame gives, reluctant, her assenting voice.
The tragic muse demands no common dress,
And excellence still borders on excess.
If unaffectedly the language flows,
How easy to exclaim, "mere vulgar prose!"
Or swear the dull, uninteresting theme,
Lulls like the murmurs of a purling stream.
If the bold numbers, like a torrent's course,
Roll with impetuous, overwhelming force;
If passion make the broken measures pant,
Who but condemns it, as unmeaning rant:
Or if the quick, the spirited reply,
The pause, the start, the sorrow-breathing sigh,
And every varied gesture, which, impress'd
By nature, rises from the feeling breast,
The scene embellish, these we may reject
As the mere pantomime of stage effect.
If, brooding o'er its wrongs, in thought refin'd,
The poet trace the workings of the mind;
If, sunk in passive grief, the wretched groan,

Or

P R O L O G U E.

*Or make in fond complaint their suff'ring known,
Here pride disdains the sorrow's plaintive flow,
And there derides the sophistry of woe.*

*Not more the shapes, by changeful Proteus worn,
Than wit fastidious takes to mark its scorn;
With nobler purpose has our bard employ'd
His utmost strength, your censure to avoid:
Conscious of failings, studious of applause,
To your tribunal he submits his cause.
Here wisdom judges each attempt to please;
Here mercy tempers all your just decrees.
This night presents an Oriental Tale,
Where customs, different as the clime, prevail;
Where passions, fir'd by nearer suns, impart
A glow more ardent to th' expanding heart;
And language, brilliant as their beams, displays
Its daring flight in more aspiring phrase.*

*These to pourtray in colours bold, yet true,
As nature gives them in those climes to view,
Our author aims: but while th' approaching hour
Decides his fate, from your acknowledg'd pow'r,
Your candour trusting, as he knows your skill,
Tho' hope and fear, his breast alternate fill,
Yet hope, superior, whispers in his ear—
The most judicious—are the least severe.*

P R O L O G U E.

By the same FRIEND, as originally written.

*I*N days long past, when ev'ry muse was young,
Persuasion dwelt on ev'ry poet's tongue;
By means most obvious were the passions rais'd,
And pleas'd with novelty the public prais'd:
Now, when Melpomene, from year to year,
Calls Terror forth, or draws Compassion's tear,
By plenty cloy'd, and difficult of choice,
Fame gives reluctant her assenting voice;
And ev'ry critic claims the right supreme
With watchful eye to scan the poet's dream.

Hard as the task appears, new dangers rise,
To guard the conquest of the tragic prize;
* When here so late Thalia's fav'rite son
Crown'd with your fairest wreaths his course hath run;
And while with justest aim his glitt'ring spear
Stops each pretender in his vain career;
So bright his satire strikes the dazzled view,
That with false arts he almost damns the true.

The tragic muse demands no common dress,
And excellence still borders on excess;
If, brooding o'er its wrongs, in thought refin'd,
The poet trace the workings of the mind;
If sunk in passive grief the wretched groan,
Or make with fond complaint their juff'rings known,
Here pride disdains the sorrow's plaintive flow,
There scoff derides the sophistry of woe.
'Mid such extremes perplex'd, with firmer hand
A hapless author should his helm command,

* Alluding to Mr. Sheridan's after-piece of the Critic, represented a few weeks before Zoraida.

P R O L O G U E.

*Than that which once th' advent'rous Argo bore,
Thro' clashing rocks to reach the destin'd shore;
When Jove's own race with wonder felt the sway
Of momentary doubt and chill dismay,
Tho' Orpheus sung, and as the sign he gave,
Each oar in cadence smote the threatn'ing wave,*

*Not more the shapes by changeful Proteus worn,
Than wav'ring judges take to mark their scorn;
With nobler purpose has our bard employ'd
Each varied pow'r your censure to avoid.*

*Conscious of failings, studious of applause,
To your tribunal he submits his cause:*

*This night presents an oriental tale,
Where customs, diff'rent as the clime, prevail;
Where passions, fir'd by nearer suns, impart
A glow more ardent to th' expanding heart;
Where bolder flights, in more aspiring phrase,
The language, brilliant as their light, displays;
Where gesture wears its most tumultuous form,
And rage, pride, anguish swell the blended storm.*

*Such is his plan; but while your awful pow'r,
Decides his fate in this alarming hour;
While hope and fear by turns his bosom fill,
Trusting your candor, fearful of your skill,
His darksome doubts, some rays of comfort cheer,
Since the most skilful are the least severe.*

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

M E N.

SELIM, Emperor of the Turks,	—	Mr. PALMER.
ALMAIMON, Bey of Egypt,	—	Mr. SMITH.
OSMAN, Vizir to Selim,	— —	Mr. BENSLEY.
MORALMIN, Governor of Cairo for Almaimon,	— — }	Mr. PACKER.
ZIRVAD, a Dervise,	— —	Mr. AICKIN.
HELI, Chief Eunuch and Governor of Selim's Haram,	— }	Mr. PHILIMORE.
MOTAFAR, an Egyptian Officer,	—	Mr. NORRIS.
ACHMET, a Friend to Osman,	—	Mr. CHAPLIN.

W O M E N.

ZORAIDA, an Orphan at the Court of Egypt,	— — }	Mrs. YATES.
ZULIMA, her Friend, and Daughter to Moralmin,	— — }	Mrs. SHARP.

Imans, Officers, Guards, Mutes, &c.

The principal vocal Parts of the Epithalamium by Mr.
GAUDRY, Miss FIELD, and Miss ABRAMS.

SCENE CAIRO, and the Plain around it.

ZORAIDA:

A TRAGEDY.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

*A chamber in the palace. The curtain drawn discovers
Zoraida on a sofa. Zulima attending.*

ZORAIDA.

O SENSIBILITY! thou fatal gift
Of partial heav'n! how wretched their condition
Who, 'mid the fleeting unsubstantial visions
Of sublunary bliss, too fondly trust
Thy golden prospects, and ideal pleasures!
Perhaps this hour th' inexorable angel
Issues the fatal mandate which consigns
Almaimon to the tomb. The thought appalls me!

ZULIMA.

Why will Zoraida ceaseless thus permit
The canker sorrow, with envenom'd tooth,
To batten on her peace? Th' impartial justice
Of Alha, doubt not, soon with due success
Will crown his righteous cause: A few short hours
Will bring him back invincible, to force
Imperious Selim from the walls of Cairo,
And in the mosque confirm that holy bond
These hostile inroads have too long protracted.

A

ZORAIDA.

ZORAIDA.

Alas! my Zulima, I fear the stern
 Predestinating providence of Alha
 Decrees Zoraida never shall partake
 Such envied happiness. With outstretch'd plumes
 Protect his person, tutelary angels!
 Should he be slain, my sole defence, and guardian,
 What varied woes await a friendless orphan,
 Of birth unknown.

ZULIMA.

That birth becomes your virtues.
 When old Abdalla—whose experienc'd arm,
 Firm on the brow of Selim's fire, sustain'd
 The radiant orb of majesty—entrusted
 Your helpless age to Almorad's munificence,
 Who then was lord of Egypt, his dispatches
 Distinctly vouch'd your honorable lineage,
 Altho' the perils menacing your infancy
 Induc'd the cautious vizir to conceal
 The authors of your being.

ZORAIDA.

Wretched being!
 Thrown at my birth upon a stormy sea,
 My lab'ring bark, to winds and waves expos'd,
 Still wanders on without a star to guide
 Its erring course. Would heav'n! the pitying peasants,
 Who sav'd, and brought me to the court of Egypt,
 Had bred me as their daughter, nor reveal'd
 My hapless fortune.

ZULIMA.

Have you then forgotten
 With what affection Almorad receiv'd
 The orphan pledge entrusted to his honor,
 And shar'd between Almaimon and yourself
 A parent's anxious tenderness?

ZORAIDA.

A T R A G E D Y.

ZORAIDA.

No, Zulima,

The recollection of that happy period,
When, with his son, my soul's espous'd, I shar'd
The love of Almorad, my busy fancy
Fills with a thousand images which melt
My throbbing bosom, Venerable shade!
Yes, to the latest verge of my existence,
With reverential gratitude my soul
Thy goodness shall commemorate, and dwell
With ceaseless transport on thy honor'd name.

ZULIMA.

Had he surviv'd, what unaffected joy
Would fill his bosom, thus to see the rose
Of beauty blooming on your damask cheek
With inexpressive loveliness; and mild
As streams th' ethereal radiance from the brow
Of night's fair planet, every placid virtue
In gentle emanations from your mind
Unrivall'd beaming! What unbounded transport
Would crown his eve of life, in holy bonds
To join with yours Almaimon's hand, whose hearts
Love long has twin'd together!

ZORAIDA.

Yes, my friend,

From earliest infancy together bred,
We liv'd, we grew in friendship, and I lov'd
Before I knew what meant the soft emotions
Which thrill'd my maiden breast. Alas! the blessings
Which hail'd those smiling moments all are vanish'd,
Like unsubstantial visions of the night
For ever vanish'd, and have left behind
Nought but the fond remembrance of that period,
To double now my sorrows.

Z O R A I D A : A

ZULIMAS

But those blessings

May yet return. Perhaps, this storm o'erblown,
Such joys await to crown your future days,
As soon will banish every tender terror,
And tenfold recompense these woes : perhaps,
The veil which shrouds the secret of your birth
May yet be drawn.

Z O R A I D A.

Ideal expectation !

Oh ! had Abdalla, ere the hand of Azrael
By heav'n's commission measur'd his existence,
But pointed out some kind-directing clue,
Amid this endless labyrinth of error,
To guide our search.

S C E N E II.

Enter Moralmín.

Z O R A I D A.

What means this haste, Moralmín ?

M O R A L M I N.

Th' expected succor is at length arriv'd ;
Almaimon comes to reinstate our fortune.
From yon tall tow'r, terrific as the roar
Of headlong Nile, where, prison'd 'twixt the hills
And rocks of Nubia, his imperial flood
Bursts in tremendous cataracts, I heard
The charging techir, and at distance saw
Their unsheath'd sabres to the mid-day sun
In horrid splendor flaming.

Z O R A I D A.

Ministring spirits !

Who see th' emotions struggling in my heart,
Preserve my warring hero ! When I think,
Conflicting passions rend my heart alternate.

Clad

Clad in the robe of victory, now hope
 Smiles in my sight ; now fear, with pallid cheek
 And haggard eye, her bloody steel protending,
 Points to my lover wel'ring in his gore,
 And chills my veins within me.—Hark ! what means

[Warlike instruments at a distance.]

That sudden burst, which, wafted by the wind,
 Rings thro' the palace ?

MORALMIN.

'Tis the peal of battle,
 And calls me to the field ; my royal master
 May need my instant aid. Adieu, fair prince !
 I go to share Almaimon's glorious conquest,
 Or meet an envied death.

[Exit Moralmin.]

ZORAIDA.

Oh haste, Moralmin,
 On eagle's pennons hasten to my lord,
 And guard his sacred life. Meantime, my Zulima,
 Repair we to the mosque, and there invoke
 The pow'rs above with solemn supplication.

ZULIMA.

Oh could we follow to the field unseen,
 And combat by their side, or unperceiv'd
 Could hover o'er them, and the murd'ring sabre
 Turn from their breasts innoxious !

ZORAIDA.

But since Alha
 That envied office to our sex denies ;
 Come, let us use the only arms allow'd us,
 And offer up submissive to his throne
 The hallow'd incense of our pray'rs and tears,
 His best lov'd tribute from offending mortals.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE

S C E N E III.

The field, with a distant view of the city. Warlike instruments, and shouts of victory. Then enter Almaimon hastily, his sabre drawn.

ALMAIMON.

Perdition seize the dastards! all is lost!
 Dismay, defeat, and carnage thro' my host
 Stalk unresisted. Stop, ignoble traitors!
 In vain I call, I reason to the winds;
 Fear wings their steps, while Selim thro' the field
 Shoots like a meteor, which the traveller sees
 At midnight dart across some blasted heath,
 And shudders at the view. Behold he comes,
 And conquest strides before him—Ha! my sight
 Deceives me sure, or with him I behold
 Moralmin prisoner—'Tis my friend, by heav'n!
 Some new disaster, yet to me unknown,
 I fear me has arriv'd—Perhaps Zoraida
 A prey to ruffians, at this moment frantic
 Calls on Almaimon.—Horrible suggestion!
 Swift let me fly upon the wings of love,
 Fly to preserve her innocence and beauty
 From galling chains, or brutal violation.

[Exit.]

S C E N E IV.

As he goes out, enter on the other side Selim, with officers and soldiers, and Moralmin prisoner.

SELIM.

Here breathe we from our toils; in full career
 Bid conquest pause, and let the wheels of Azrael
 Stay their ensanguin'd course, nor more distain
 His scythed axle with the blood of nations:—
 Thou, whose stern brow still haughty frowns defiance,

And

A TRAGEDY.

And braves the fury of an angry victor,
Say, chief, who art thou?

MORALMIN.

One who scorns disguise;

And, tho' in bonds, undaunted dares avow
His sworn allegiance, his confirm'd attachment,
To great Almaimon, whose determin'd soul,
Firm and unyielding as his native pyramids,
Whose summits scorn the tempest which assails them,
Still dauntless braves the thunder of your ire.

SELIM.

Thy loyalty and fortitude become thee;
In proof whereof, behold thy conqueror's hand
Restores thy fabre.—Now go tell your master,
That Selim holds his menaces more harmless
Than summer vapours, which, at eve enkindled,
Innoxious shoot along the dusky sphere;
And, crown'd with victory, disdains alike
The feeble vengeance of thy lord and thee.

MORALMIN.

'Tis well; despise it, till, like heav'n's own shaft,
Long pent, and bosom'd 'mid surrounding clouds,
Forth burst concentrated th' elastic flame,
Mark its red course with universal ruin,
And, down descending on your tow'r of glory,
Level the haughty fabric with the dust. [Exit.

SELIM.

'Tis bravely boasted.

SCENE V.

Enter Osman.

SELIM.

Say—what tidings, Osman?

OSMAN.

Full fraught with glorious embassy, dread lord,
Your slave is come to greet you. Alha fights

I

Himself

Himself your battles ; not sublimer glory
 The prophet crown'd when Mecca's holy city
 Acknowledg'd him her victor. Cairo storm'd
 Now bows beneath your scepter ; on her tow'rs
 See where our banners, to the gale unfurl'd,
 Triumphant glitter.

SELIM.

Thanks, propitious Alha !
 With careful speed across th' encrimson'd field
 Hie thee, and call our squadrons from pursuit ;
 While we attempt to stop yon growing carnage,
 And save the city. *[Exit Selim attended.]*

OSMAN.

Were my pray'rs successful.
 Soon should'st thou lie beneath its ruins bury'd.
 But heav'n averse withstands my wish, and heaps
 Increasing honors on this tyrant's head,
 Who dar'd despotic ravish from my arms
 My blooming captive, purchas'd with my blood :
 For which, if I forgive him, may I live
 The laugh and scorn of women ! Yet, altho'
 On conquest's wings he ride, my vengeful arm
 May check his flight. Already have my arts
 Amid the Janizaries, ever prompt
 To lift the standard of rebellion, spread
 The ferment of sedition. If Almainon
 Accept my service, and my purpose second,
 This haughty sultan to his ruin soon
 Shall find me terrible as Lybia's serpents,
 Who, if some foot invade their secret haunts,
 Erect their glitt'ring crests, collect their poison,
 And round them dart inevitable death. *[Exit.]*

SCENE

SCENE

S C E N E VI.

A retired walk in the gardens of the palace. Shouts, and clashing of arms are heard within.

Enter Zoraida and Zulima, as flying from the tumult.

ZORAIDA.

Amazement! horror! whither shall we fly
From this terrific scene? Devouring flames
Enwrap the palace—Hark! what bray of arms
Rings thro' its echoing roofs! In terrors rob'd,
The angel of destruction is upon us,
And ruin marks his progress.

ZULIMA.

Yes, the storm
Beats hard upon our heads; yet do not yield
To feminine despondence. Trust in hope,
Whose glimm'ring radiance, like the light of Pharos
To mariners by night upon the deep
With tempests struggling, still at distance cheers us.
Perhaps ev'n now Almainon crown'd——

ZULIMA.

Will you then fall into the hands of ruffians,
 Whose callous hearts not beauty's self can soften ?
 Or, kept to fill the haughty victor's train,
 Be made a mark for gazing crowds to point at ?

ZORAIDA.

Forbid it, Alha !

ZULIMA.

Fly then, princess, fly !

Within yon grove, due westward from the scene
 Where late the battle rag'd, a Dervise dwells,
 Whose sacred cell the ministers of war
 Will not presume to violate. While all
 On spoil intent, these robbers waste the city,
 Our steps perchance may reach the hallow'd spot
 Unnotic'd, unpursu'd.

ZORAIDA.

Then let us hence,

While liberty is ours ; in that lone seat
 Of holy sequestration will I live,
 Till I can learn what fortune has befall'n
 My bosom's lord ; then fly with anxious love
 To mitigate his sorrows ; or, if Azrael
 Decree we ne'er must meet again on earth,
 Shake off this load, and join him in the tomb. [Exeunt.

S C E N E VII.

*As they go out, enter on the other side Almainon and
 Moraimin.*

ALMAIMON *speaking as they enter.*

This way avoids them—Look, some new pursuit
 Turns their attention and their footsteps from us.
 Yet why avoid them ? Wherefore should I live
 To view yon horrid spectacle ! Whence came
 This dire misfortune ? Was the city forc'd ?
 When late I left it to collect fresh levies,

A T R A G E D Y.

'Twas well provided to resist th' assault
Of Selim's myriads.

MORALMIN.

Perfidy, rank perfidy!

Soon as I saw the long-expected succour
My lord had brought, and heard the Tecbir sound,
I left the city to the care of Morad,
Whose faith had hitherto stood unimpeach'd,
And hasten'd to the field. Mean time the villain
Abus'd my trust, and op'd the gates to Selim.

ALMAIMON.

Disloyal caitiff! Father of compassion!
For what omission has thy wrath decreed me
These aggravated sorrows? To behold
The fiend ambition, like a fiery comet,
Shake devastation from his blazing hair!
Wide o'er my ruin'd realm. Zoraida too!
Some dire disaster has befall'n my love!
Thro' blood, and flames, and varied forms of death,
With desp'rate step I've fought her, but in vain.

MORALMIN.

Amid the havock of this fatal day,
What, what may she, and my defenceless Zulima,
Together have encount'red!

ALMAIMON.

Ev'n this moment

Perhaps her beauties by remorseless Azrael
Are ravish'd from me; or a fate more horrid—
Perhaps pollution—Woes upheav'd on woes
United pierce, and harrow up my heart.

S C E N E VIII.

Enter Motafar

ALMAIMON.

Now, Motafar, what means—

MOTAFAR.

Haste, royal Sir;

Immediate haste thee, lest you come too late
To save the princess.

ALMAIMON.

Is she then in peril?

Dire aggravation! Instantly inform me
Where is my love? Speak, Motafar, say where,
That I may fly on eagle wing to rescue her.

MOTAFAR.

As with a small, but loyal band, I hasted
To aid the city, from the palace garden
I saw her rush, by Zulima attended:
A Turkish troop pursu'd, and overtook them.
My little band I instantly consign'd
To Hamed's care, my long try'd friend, with orders
To fly intrepid to their aid, and strive
By every effort to maintain the conflict,
While I endeavor'd to collect fresh succour,
And bring our bravest veterans to support him.

ALMAIMON.

Swifter than whirlwinds instant let us fly,
My valiant warriors—In my glowing bosom
I feel the strength of armies.—Hear me, Alha!
Give but my arm in this tremendous crisis
The darling treasure of my soul to save,
No more my lips my fortune shall accuse,
But trust, resign'd, that providential goodness
Which makes the cause of innocence its care.

A C T

A T R A G E D Y.

13

A C T II.

S C E N E I.

The sultan's pavilion. Selim is discovered sitting on his throne, with his officers and guards attending.

OSMAN.

HAIL, mighty lord! imperial victor, hail!
Amid the spoils of this auspicious day
A blooming captive, lovelier than the maids
Who deck the borders of Circassian Sargis,
Or tread the vale of flower-enamell'd Zabra,
Within my tent awaits your sov'reign mandate.

SELIM to HELI.

Haste, and conduct her instant to our presence. [Ex. Heli.]
Mean time, brave Osman, say by what good fortune
She fell into your pow'r.

OSMAN.

As round the plain,
At your command, I posted, from pursuit
Calling our squadrons, I at distance saw
Two females issue from yon western gate
Chac'd by a troop of Turks; but scarce they seiz'd them
Ere I arriv'd, and rescu'd from their gripe
The lovely prey; when suddenly from forth
The city furious rush'd a desperate band;
Led by a chief more terrible and fierce
Than fancy paints th' inexorable angel,
When, arm'd with lightnings, he bestrides the whirlwind,
And marks his path with slaughter. On he rush'd
With headlong fury, while his brandish'd sabre
Flam'd in the front, tremendous as the blade
Which erst at Ohad's sanguinary list
Blaz'd in the prophet's grasp, till, overpower'd
Like him by mightier numbers, to the ground

Disabled,

Disabled, stunn'd, insensible, he fell,
While I th' advantage of the crisis seiz'd,
And bore away the prize.

SELIM.

But say, how bears she
This dire mischance ?

OSMAN.

Oe'rwhelm'd with grief : so bends
The Persian Lily, when the dews of heaven
Hang glistring on its forehead—But behold
Where Heli leads her.

SELIM *advancing.*

She is fair indeed ;
More fair than fancy paints th' immortal Houris,
Who sport voluptuous on the velvet brink
Of odoriferous Zenzibil, and dress
The fragrant bow'rs appointed for the faithful.

SCENE II.

Enter Heli, with Zoraida and Zulima.

ZORaida *kneeling to* SELIM.

Low at your feet, victorious sultan, see
Two wretched captives, victims of affliction,
By adverse fate compell'd to fly to you
For mercy and protection.

SELIM.

Rise, sweet maid,
When beauty sues what bosom is not soften'd :
Altho' the fortune of the tented field
Has made that beauty mine, know, gentle mourner,
I scorn to dim the lustre of my glory
By ignominious deeds. No, all the wealth
The pow'r of Selim, all that boundless love
And tenderness can lavish—Turn not from me—
By all my hopes of paradise I swear—

ZORaida.

ZORAIDA.

Bless'd with the brightest beauties of the East,
 Whose opening charms the worm of sorrow blights not,
 No grief to dim the radiance of their eyes,
 Or make the roses wither on their cheeks,
 Oh cease to persecute a wretched woman,
 Distracted with her sorrows.

SELIM.

Do not name them ;
 Thy matchless form eclipses more their charms
 Than yon resplendent orb the glimm'ring stars.
 'Tis you I doat on, with a flame as holy
 As that which burns in pious dervise bosoms.
 My throne, my empire, my unrivall'd pow'r
 Beneath your feet I lay, eternal pleasures
 Shall hover round us, each succeeding hour
 Shall, as it passes, into bliss be melted,
 And transports boundless as the love of Selim,
 Uninterrupted crown our happy days.

ZORAIDA.

Cease this vain suit, nor thus encrease my sorrows.
 No, my lov'd lord, tho' envious fortune cancels
 The holy vows we seal'd; their dear rememb'rance
 Shall ever live within my bosom cherish'd.
 My life is yours, but urge me not to break—

SELIM.

Wrong not my love, thou dear, impatient fair one,
 With such suspicion. No, retire, sweet maid,
 And calm these terrors ; by the sacred trunk
 Of Zedrat's tree, whose everlasting foliage
 Shadows the throne of Alha, here I vow
 Ne'er till the hand of all-composing time
 Shall shed its balm, and mitigate your anguish,
 Shall my lips urge my fervent passion farther.
 Heli approach ; conduct her to our Haram,
 And see her treated with distinguish'd honor.

[*Exeunt Zor. Zul. and Heli.*]

SELIM

SELIM *looking after her.*

Immortal pow'rs ! what secret magic melts
The coldest heart when beauty fues in tears !
She must be mine ; yet will I not abuse
By brutal outrage my unbounded pow'r,
Or violate her charms. Let others woo
A cold reluctant mistress, but be mine
The joy to triumph o'er the captive heart,
And gain the fair who loves with mutual passion.

[*Exit attended.*]

OSMAN.

Now Alha smiles, and fate itself conspires
To favour my intent. Beyond my hope
My purpose is accomplish'd. This fair captive,
Whose matchless charms have fir'd the wanton sultan,
His every thought will occupy, and seal
The lid of swart suspicion. Then no longer
Let me delay the golden opportunity
Which fortune offers, but find out Almailmon,
And all my purpose open. Brave Moraimin,
Whom antient hospitality must bind
To mutual courtesy, will prove my zeal,
My honor, worthy to revive the cause
Of drooping Egypt, and indignant tear
The wreath of triumph from the brow of Selim. [*Exit.*]

SCENE - III.

A grove of palms, with the cell of a dervise. Enter from the cell Almailmon, Moraimin, and Zirvad.

ZIRVAD *speaking as they enter to Almailmon.*

Bethink you, Sir, the office I sustain
Will not permit me, unprov'd, to hear
These ravings of impatience. Oh controul
This storm of passion, nor pollute these shades,
This peaceful cell, with frantic exclamations,
Where penitence, and piety, alone,
Are wont to breathe their orisons.

AL-

ALMAIMON.

Away!

Begone, old man, nor talk to me of piety,
 Thy moral precepts cannot calm a foul
 Tortur'd like mine; the pressure of my sorrows
 Surpasses all endurance. Had the mercy
 Of Alha rescued from this general wreck
 My dear Zoraida, I had met resign'd
 The will of heav'n, and held the skies auspicious.
 Curse on this hand, this weak, unfaithful hand—

MORALMIN.

My royal master, why this self-reproach?
 No mortal arm could more have done to save her;
 Brave then th' increasing tempest. Noble minds,
 Immoveable as Pharos, which defies
 The idle fury of the chafing brine,
 That ever with recoiling undulation
 Beats on its stedfast basis, should confront
 The billows of adversity. Be calm;
 Take comfort, Sir.

ALMAIMON.

And talk'st thou yet of comfort?

Thy frozen veins a lover's passion feel not,
 Nor know a lover's torments: while I speak
 Perhaps some vile indignity is offer'd her,
 Which thought recoils at.—Be the hour accurst
 In which, by hope of victory deluded,
 I left her trembling innocence expos'd.

SCENE IV.

Enter MOTAFAR.

My lord, a stranger of exalted port,
 Who asks with earnest accents for admission,
 Conjur'd me to deliver these dispatches
 Immediate to my sovereign.

ALMAIMON.

Hah! what mystery! (*Reading.*)

C

“Osman,

" Osman, the foe of tyranny and Selim,
 " Whom private wrongs, no less than indignation
 " To see the rights of sovereigns and of nations
 " Thus wantonly invaded, have confirm'd
 " The friend of Egypt, humbly asks permission
 " To vindicate his conduct from the semblance
 " Of dark dissimulation, and disclose
 " The secret means by which this night he trusts
 " To dash the sultan from his tow'ring height,
 " And on his throne replace the lord of Egypt."

I thank thee, heav'n ! again a ray of hope
 Tinges the murky horrors which surround me.
 How deem you of this scroll ? Moralmin, speak,
 Speak, Motafar ; know either of you ought
 May prove this Osman worthy to obtain
 Our regal confidence ?

M O R A L M I N.

My lord, when erst
 In early manhood, at th' imperial court
 Of Bajazet I sojourn'd, with this Osman
 In one unvaried intercourse I liv'd
 Of social freedom. Him I then esteem'd
 A haughty soldier, of his rights tenacious,
 But free from guile, and open in his manners ;
 Nor doubt I now his amplitude of pow'r,
 Since all the band of Janizaries love
 Their martial leader,

A L M A I M O N.

Ever-prais'd be Alha !
 That thus, beyond my dearest expectation,
 I find a friend—Haste, Motafar, and bring
 This Osman to us.

[Exit Mot,

Z I R V A D.

Thus his wisdom deals
 With erring man, When prison'd in the depth

A TRAGEDY.

19

Of Fate's mysterious labyrinth, we see
No prospect left, but Hope, her white wings waving,
Consigns us to despair, by wond'rous means
He sets us free, and bids us henceforth trust
That pow'r alone on whose almighty nod
The balanc'd destiny of empires hangs.

ALMAIMON.

I feel it true; no more will I despair.
Moralmin fly, and instantly arrange,
Beneath the covert of these friendly palms,
Anew for fight the remnant of our host,
While we, in secret interview with Osman,
Concert the means shall crown our brave attempt,
And free Zoraida.

SCENE V.

Enter Osman.

MORALMIN.

Oh beware, my lord,
Beware of perfidy, nor trust too easily
The specious tale—perhaps some black design
Contriv'd for your perdition.

OSMAN.

No Moralmin,
The soldier once distinguish'd by your friendship
Disdains such foul hypocrisy. Behold,
Sovereign of Egypt, in myself behold
Osman, who comes to give the sternest test
No foul conspiracy, no latent treason,
Lurk in his heart, by trusting to your honor
His safety, fame, and life; nay more, acknowledges
'Twas he who guided the victorious squadrons
Who late, in desperate combat, from yourself
The prize of beauty won.

ALMAIMON.

Hast thou saidst thou, soldier?
Heard I aught? Art thou the chief, whose arm,

By numbers aided, from my longing eyes
Tore my Zoraida?

OSMAN.

I confess the deed.

But then I knew not 'twas the lord of Cairo,
Whom in fierce conflict—

ALMAIMON.

Yes, it was Almailon.

Dear, hapless maid ! but yet I will avenge thee,
Or join and share thy bondage.

OSMAN.

Hush these transports !

If Alha bend propitious to our wishes,
The princefs yet may be restor'd.

ALMAIMON.

She may !

She shall. This arm shall free her from his power,
Or perish in th' attempt. Two rival suns,
Whose fiery orbs with lurid glare o'erspread
The red'ning concave, when in angry conflict
Contesting both the empire of the skies
With deep dismay they fill astonied nations,
Are Selim and Almailon, and in blood
Soon one or both shall set.

OSMAN.

Heroic ardor !

Behold a friend determined to assist
Your righteous cause, and reinstate your fortune.
This night, if yet your valour dare the trial,
This night shall crown it, and release the princefs.

ALMAIMON.

Is there a deed Almailon shall not dare
To rescue his Zoraida from the tyrant ?

OSMAN.

Hear then ; when darkness canopies the globe,
A faithful guide shall bring you to the camp ;

There,

There, while secure in sleep's oblivious clasp,
The victor host is laid, and, gain'd by me,
Th' external guards an unresisted passage
Yield to your daring feet, our mutual wrongs
One instant shall avenge.

ALMAIMON.

By heav'n 'tis well.
Th' invigorating thought distends my bosom
With renovated ardor, Swiftly speed
Thou loit'ring fun—

MORALMIN.

Already in the west
Behold he brings the glorious period onward
Will ask our utmost energy; for look
Where his broad orb declines, while ebon night
Advancing fast, around the dome of heaven
Her sable mantle throws.

ALMAIMON.

And soon our valour
Shall greet her presence with a nobler sight
Than e'er the day was witness to. But first
Oh lead me, lead me, where my love deplores
Her alter'd state, that once more to my breast
The tender mourner folding, I may prove
I live to guard her, and restore her freedom.

O S M A N.

Th' attempt I fear is hazardous—The guards
Who round the camp incessantly patrol—

MORALMIN.

Reflect, my lord, nor rashly thus expose
Your life to peril.

Z I R V A D.

Think what horrid fate
Inevitably waits you, should the guards
Your regal form discover.

M O.

MORALMIN.

Think too, think,
What woes await the princess, should she lose
Her sole protector.

ALMAIMON.

No, for her dear sake,
Heav'n will preserve me, that this guardian arm
May shield her orphan innocence. Thou dear
Afflicted beauty! Yes, I will behold thee,
Will hear once more the music of thy lips,
Far more melodious than the dulcet sounds
Breath'd from the harps which hang amid the bow'rs
Of paradise, when first their golden chords,
Fann'd by the gale which issues from the mount
Where Alha sits enshrined, spontaneous chime
To more than mortal minstrelsy.

MORALMIN.

The while,
Since such thy fix'd resolve, the care be mine,
From forth the scatter'd remnant of our host
To choose the bravest Mamalukes, and range
Beneath these palms, in military files,
The veteran warriors.

ALMAIMON.

Soon will I return
To guide their steps to conquest and revenge.
Now, Osman, bring me where my captive love
Laments my absence.

OSMAN.

This way will conduct us
Strait to her tent; but first I will disguise
Beneath the well-known habit of my slave,
Thy dignity of person, to elude
Suspicion's lynx-ey'd search. Thou wilt not waste
The precious moments; should the sultan find

I dare

I dare betray his trust, farewell revenge,
Our hopes are lost for ever.

ALMAIMON.

Do not fear me.

On her dear breast to weep our mutual woes
Is all Almailon wishes; that sad office
Once mournfully accomplish'd, till success
Has crown'd our brave attempt, these throbbing veins
Love's soft infection shall no more enervate,
But war alone employ my tow'ring thoughts.

[*Exeunt Almailon. Moral. Osm.*]

ZIRVAD.

At length I fear the vengeance of the Highest
O'ertakes me for my crime. This fearful night
Teems with my fate; if heav'n again espouse
The cause of Selim, I must save Almailon,
Or aggravate my guilt. Almighty Father!
Guide him, protect him, nerve his arm in combat;
Again replace him on his native throne,
And save my age from infamy, or death!

[*Exit.*]

SCENE VI.

The Tent of Zoraida.

Enter Zoraida, and Zulima.

ZORAIDA.

When will my sufferings end? Omniscient Judge!
Release a wretch, who wishes but to pillow
Her weary head upon the lap of earth,
And lay her sorrows in the peaceful tomb.

ZULIMA.

Thro' the dark foldings of that gloomy veil
Which shrouds your destiny, a beam of light
Still gleams upon your view; the sultan's fond,
Yet unassuming, and respectful passion,
Will shield your virtue—

ZORAIDA.

No, I am condemn'd

To banishment and vassalage: perhaps,
 In some dire moment this exterior semblance
 May vanish like a dream, and I be doom'd
 To infamy a victim. The bare thought
 Extinguishes the transitory ray
 Which for a moment ting'd the clouds of woe
 That brood about my heart, and now they close
 In tenfold darkness.

ZULIMA.

Do not thus anticipate
 Your date of grief, nor brood on fancied sufferings;
 For grant they come, yet anxious thus to meet them
 Doubles each sorrow.

ZORAIDA.

Am I not divided

From all my soul holds dear? Reserv'd for insults
 Than death more dreadful? Is it this thou call'st
 To antedate the period of my sufferings,
 And brood on fancied woes? Yet these are trifles
 To that worst pang, whose terrible idea
 Curdles my blood. Perhaps Almaimon dies:
 These eyes beheld him fall in my defence;
 And now perhaps his corse lies all disfigur'd,
 No pious friend to close his languid eyes,
 And shed the tear of pity o'er his wounds.

S C E N E VII.

*Enter Osman, with Almaimon disguised.*ALMAIMON *hearing the last speech.*

No, gentle excellence! Almaimon lives,
 Lives yet to shield thy loveliness from insult——

ZORAIDA.

Can it then be? What tutelary pow'r,
 Amid the havoc of yon dreadful field,

Pre-

Preferv'd my hero for his lost Zoraida ?

Do I thus clasp him ? does he live——

ALMAIMON.

He does :

Lives to enfold thee in his faithful arms,

And press thy beauties to his throbbing heart.

ZORAIDA.

How couldst thou pass the watchful guards unseen ?

Heav'ns ! should the sultan—save me from that thought !

ALMAIMON.

To this brave friend I owe—the tale is long——

But heav'n relents ; already from behind

The passing tempest's skirts, with double lustre

The sun looks forth, and clothes in brightning beauty

The prospect late so drear. A glorious enterprize

Demands my presence ; should success attend it,

This night shall free thee, and regain my throne.

ZORAIDA.

What great design is glowing in thy breast ?

Oh might I share the danger, and the glory !

Why did heav'n frame our sex so weak and helpless,

Yet give us tow'ring minds ? Why fill our souls

With soft ideas ? make us know th' extremes

Of joy and sorrow, yet deny us pow'r

To save ourselves, or guard the man we love ?

ALMAIMON.

Unequall'd tenderness ! No, fair Zoraida,

Heav'n never meant thy filken frame should bear

The toils of manhood ; in a gentler mould

It cast thy graceful beauties, form'd thy mind

All winning softness, purity, and love,

To smoothe my passage thro' this pathless wild,

And make me bear a wretched world with patience.

OSMAN.

Your pardon, Sir, that Osman thus presumes

To interrupt—But every moment now

Is doubly precious. Think on what a thread
Our future fortune hangs.

ALMAIMON.

I go, my friend ;

This instant go——

Z O R A I D A.

And I will be thy partner ;

For thee will rise superior to my sex,
And brave th' extremes of peril in the front
Of fierce, embattled armies.

O S M A N.

Generous princefs !

But fate withstands. Those unrelenting guards,
Who wait round yon pavilion, would oppose
And bar thy passage.

ALMAIMON.

Think'st thou then, Zoraida,

Thy fond Almailon could behold that beauty
To war's rude blast expos'd ? No, wait with patience,
Osman will tell thee all our secret purpose ;
Soon shall this arm release thee, and repay
With tenfold love thy virtues. We but part
Some few short hours ; again I trust to meet
With tenfold joy.

Z O R A I D A.

That trust alone supports me.

I will not damp the fervor of thy spirit
By weak expostulations—but remember,
No single death attends the murd'rous fabre
Whose blade is crimson'd with Almailon's blood. [*Exeunt.*]

A C T

A C T III.

S C E N E I.

Night. The field. The moon shining. A view of Selim's army encamped.

Enter Almailon, Moralmin, Motafar, Achmet, soldiers, &c.

ALMAIMON.

THUS far, my friends, we climb the rugged steep
Of peril undiscover'd. Shroud thy beams,
Thou envious moon, that, like our conqu'ring prophet,
When veil'd beneath the pall of night he storm'd
The fort of Zabar, I may rush to vengeance,
And emulate his fame.

MORALMIN.

His guardian hand
Seems in our aid miraculously stretch'd,
Clear, as when erst at his command yon planet
Cloven afunder, to the miscreant Koreish
Proclaim'd his heav'nly mission; for behold
Where, unsuspecting, in secure repose
The weary camp is laid; while silence steals
From tent to tent with undiscover'd step.

ALMAIMON.

Fountain of mercy! whose perennial spring
Flows ever undiminish'd, now thy aid
Almighty interpose! And thou, O prophet!
In this emergence, with thy matchless ardor,
Inform thy suppliant's breast; his swelling nerves
Brace with thy dauntless energy, to vindicate
His suffering realm, and save the fairest pattern
Of loveliness and innocence! Come, Achmet,
Conduct our footsteps to the glorious scene
Where death or conquest soon shall crown our valour.

ACHMET.

This path will bring us to the destin'd spot
Where Osman waits your coming.

ALMAIMON.

Then lead onward.
Now, my brave friends, unsheath your shining sabres,
And act like men. *[They unsheath their sabres.]*

Remember the reward
Our dying prophet promis'd. Fall who may,
In such a cause, the everlasting gates
Of paradise shall open to receive
His mounting spirit. There, while crowds of warriors
Hail his arrival, and the rose-lipt Houris
Invite him to their arms, his weary limbs
In spicy Zenzibil's ambrosial flood
Shall bathe voluptuous; from the nectar'd fruits
That bloom spontaneous on its velvet brink
Imbibe eternity of youth; or laid
On beds of flow'rs where odoriferous winds
Breathe heav'nly fragrance, drain the sparkling goblet,
Crown'd with the luscious grape, till ev'ry sense
Be molten with delight, and ev'ry hero
Absorb'd in visions of celestial bliss,
Lose all remembrance of his earthly toils! *[Exeunt.]*

S C E N E II.

The tent of Zoraida.

ZORAIDA *on a sofa.*

Yon silver planet half her orb has circled,
And yet Almaimon comes not—some dire accident
I fear has interven'd—Oh fell suspense!
Thou bane of human happiness! Thy terrors,
Swift as the shadows of disparted clouds
Across the surface of the golden field
By driving winds are hurried, o'er my brain
Successive vibrate, nor allow my soul

One

One interval of quiet.—Hark!—Methinks

[Noise at distance, which by degrees approaches.]

A distant sound!—again!—with joy I hail

Th' auspicious omen, which, I trust, proclaims

Th' arrival of my lord.—It does, it does,

For louder now the tumult swells around me,

And now more near approaches. Guardian spirits!

Hover around him, save him in this crisis,

And crown his valour with deserv'd success!

SCENE III.

Alarm.—Then enter hastily Almaimon, his sabre in his hand.

ALMAIMON.

Hell blast this villain, wantonly to break

His plighted promise! Had he join'd my arm

This night had fix'd my fortune. Now, Zoraida,

All efforts are in vain—the fatal toils

At length are clos'd around us; in the snare

Inextricably hemm'd, no hope is left,

No prospect of escape.

ZORAIDA.

Good angels guard us!

Behold yon soldiers, see with rapid steps

They hasten towards us!

ALMAIMON.

Yes, from wing to wing

The camp is rous'd, the hunters are upon us;

Like savage Tartars eager for their prey

On every side they compass us. I see

The crimson steel of Azrael unsheath'd

To period my existence. Must I lose thee!

Must I again behold that lovely form

A prey to ruffians!—No, it shall not be—

Distraction! desperation's in the thought—

Dear, hapless beauty! To my panting heart

Now tenfold dearer—how shall I express

What gives that heart unutterable anguish—

I cannot name it—but there is one way,
And only one, by which I can preserve thee.

Z O R A I D A.

Behold my bosom—why dost thou delay
The welcome blow?—On this lov'd breast to fall——

A L M A I M O N.

Shall then Almaimon, whose fond clasp should shield
Thy tender frame from violence, shall he,
Shall he deform that breast of alabaster,
The seat of love and constancy, with blood?
Horror to think of! 'Mid thy caverns, Earth,
O'erwhelm us deep, and hide me from a deed
Which makes all nature tremble!

Z O R A I D A.

Oh! reflect,
What doom awaits me—think you now behold me
Dragg'd by his slaves a victim to dishonor;
These streaming eyes, this wildly heaving bosom,
Pleading in vain for pity. Think you see
Your lov'd Zoraida, frantic in her rage,
Tear off her tresses——

A L M A I M O N.

Raise no more this image,
The bare idea chills my shiv'ring nerves
With agonies convulsive—Yes, my sabre—
The silent tomb together—Cruel conflict!
Are these thy mercies, Alha!—Rather lance
The triple bolts, and blasted on the ground
Stretch us immediate dead!—But see they come——
Now, love support me—*[Lifting his arm; at that instant—*

S C E N E IV.

Enter Selim, Osman, and soldiers.

SELIM *catching hold of his arm.*

Hold thy impious hand,
Inhuman coward! Monster! dar'st thou hope
To meet with mercy, or from us, or heav'n,

For such a deed ? Or vainly dost thou hope,
Thou woman's murd'rer ! to defy the wrath
Of Selim with impunity ?

ALMAIMON.

Alike

I scorn thy mercy, and defy thy wrath.
Since I must fall, I will not fall unknown,
Contemn'd, dishonour'd——

SELIM.

Hence, I will not hear thee.

Guards, seize the villain ; drag him to that fate
His unexempl'd cruelty deserves.

ZORAIDA.

If thou would'st save me from immediate madness
Recall the mandate, Sultan, and release him.
Butchers, away !—ye know not whom ye murder——
He is——he is——

SCENE V.

Enter Heli hastily.

HELI.

Forgive, imperial lord,
Th' intrusion of your slave : the soldiers rous'd
To sudden mutiny, your tent encircling,
Demand th' Egyptian captive, in whose cause
They now suspect this unforeseen assault
Was made upon the camp. In vain I try'd
To combat their temerity ; they urg'd
Her meditated flight—Yourself alone
The tumult can appease.

ALMAIMON.

Oh cast me forth

A victim to their malice ; but preserve
Zoraida from their rage !

S E L I M.

Yes, daring caittiff!

Osman, consign him instant to the foldiers,
 And bid them sate their rage: the while ourself
 Will fly to check their insolent career.
 Back from my presence, like the savage brood
 Who prowl the wilds of Afric, when from far
 They hear their brindled monarch, and behold
 The lightning of his eye, the foremost soon
 Will shrink aghast, or crouch in awe before me.

[Exit attended.]

S C E N E VI.

Almaimon, Zoraida, Osman.

A L M A I M O N.

Are these thy boasted promises, deceiver?
 Away, thou reptile, my indignant soul
 Disdains to commune with so foul a traitor!
 Conduct me to my fate.

Z O R A I D A.

Undone Zoraida!

Protect him, Osman; pity our condition;
 Preserve his life, and that dear proof of friendship
 Regains his former confidence.

A L M A I M O N.

No, never,

Never, Zoraida! By the sacred stone
 Which erst, self-mov'd, from paradise descended
 To deck the holy Caaba, this breast
 Shall never trust a second time the slave
 Who forfeited his honor!

O S M A N.

Hear me, prince!

By the same holy Caaba I swear
 My heart was true, and loyal to its vow;
 But adverse fortune—

A L.

ALMAIMON.

Ignominious coward!

This mean evasion adds to my contempt.

How my soul spurns thee!

ZORAIDA.

Oh! compose this passion,

Which, like the struggling of imprison'd winds,

Heaves your full breast. Permit him to explain

The secret reason that reluctant forc'd him

To falsify his promise; he may still

Be faithful to our cause.

ALMAIMON.

Thy softness melts

My resolution. Yes, for thy dear sake

I stoop to hear his varnish'd tale. Now say,

What can thy falshood offer to excuse

This base desertion of the bold design,

Thy own adoption?

OSMAN.

Sure my last dispatches,

Were they produc'd, must obviate all suspicion

My conduct might engender.

ALMAIMON.

What dispatches?

I fathom not your drift.

OSMAN.

Amazement strikes me!

Say, did not Mirza—Have you not receiv'd—

Fearing the tyrant, by some means unknown,

Our secret had discover'd, and the mine

Full charg'd with ruin was prepar'd to burst

In dire explosion round us, to my slave

A scroll I trusted, whose important purport

Was to defer our perilous atchievement

Till more convenient season, to appoint

A second meeting, and reveal the cause

E

Which

Which blasts the golden harvest of our hopes,
When ripening into vengeance.

ALMAIMON.

None have reach'd me.

OSMAN.

Perish the slave ! he dare not sure betray me.
Know then, as marshalling my troop I stood,
With keen impatience counting as they pass'd.
The watches of the night, my ardent spirit
Already mounting on th' aspiring pinion
Of fire-ey'd Expectation, orders came
At his pavilion to attend the Sultan.
With faltring steps, expecting to behold
His mutes arrang'd in terrible array,
Arm'd with the fatal bow-string, I obey'd :
Where, tho' the bodings of my teeming fancy
Had overleap'd the truth, he forc'd my stay,
Compelling me repeatedly to hear
The fulsome story of his wanton passion,
And waste the precious hours in nauseous flatt'ry.

ALMAIMON.

Curst be such fawning arts !

OSMAN.

What choice was left me ?

Oh think what tortures I endur'd, to hear
The clash of mingling spears, yet dare not stir,
Or lend assistance to the glorious deed !

ALMAIMON.

Can I believe thee ?

OSMAN.

Yes, no more mistrust me :

My heart is yours ; my vengeance still unfated
Shall yet sustain the fabric of your fortune,
Or, underneath its pond'rous ruins whelm'd,
Find a distinguish'd tomb. A new attempt,
My pregnant mind already has conceiv'd

With

With ampler ruin fraught; but speed thee hence.
 This spot is girt by dangers—Should the Sultan
 Return, and find thee—Two full hours ere noon,
 Amid yon palms which skirt the last pavilion,
 I will attend thee, and unfold my purpose.

ZORAIDA.

O haste, Almainon, fly this fatal spot
 While time is left you. Tho' his friendly arm
 Arrests our fall, yet still expos'd we stand,
 And, tottering on the precipice, behold
 The gulph beneath us.

ALMAIMON.

Yes, my love, together

With instant speed—

OSMAN.

It may not be—reflect—

The rage of Selim, should he find her fled,
 Would blast at once all future hope of vengeance,
 And seal my certain doom. To me resign her;
 A few short hours shall give her to your wishes,
 And with her Egypt.

ALMAIMON.

Must I, must I leave thee?

Leave thee a victim!—

ZORAIDA.

No; since Osman's faith

Is unimpeach'd, his friendship still will find
 Some means to save us: bear mean time this stroke
 With manly firmness. Weak ignoble minds,
 Light, and unstable as the reeds which fringe
 Our lake's clear borders, bend to every blast;
 While patriot spirits, like the rocks of Nubia,
 Tow'r in majestic dignity, and bid
 The winds defiance. But suppose the worst
 Our fears forbode, should every hope be lost,
 Should heav'n refuse to save us, death is left;

That comfort of the wretched still is ours;
We may, we will be free.

ALMAIMON.

By heav'n, thy words
New string my nerves, nor less enlivening vigour
Breathe thro' my bosom, than th' inspiring trumpet
Gives to the warrior steed. Again my breast
Resumes its wonted constancy, no more
Despair shall spread his chilling influence round me,
But on thy truth, and Alha's aid relying,
My deeds shall merit both. [Exit Alm. and Osm.]

ZORAIDA.

Yes, trust my faith;
For here I swear before th' eternal presence,
Ere I submit to falsify my vows,
The hand of Azrael shall my eyelids close!

SCENE VII.

Enter Selim, hastily.

SELIM.

Princess, my bosom shudders at the danger
Which menaces your life. Around my tent,
When I arriv'd, the daring bands were gather'd,
Demanding vengeance with incessant clamour.
At my appearance, as they had beheld
Some terrifying vision, all awhile
Abash'd, confounded stood; but soon embolden'd
By recollection of their strength, they urg'd
With added threats their claim. In vain I tried
All artifice to sooth them, like the rage
Of fires, which wafted by conspiring winds
Sweep o'er the crackling heath, from man to man
The kindling impulse flew, and every breath
Gave fuel to their phrenzy, till compell'd—
Forgive the falsehood—I affirm'd you mine,
My destin'd empress.

ZORAIDA.

ZORAIDA.

Ha! to Selim wedded!
 Forbid it, Alha!

SELIM.

Hear, obdurate, hear me!

Could other means have check'd the madding influence,
 I had not urg'd it, but that tender plea
 Can scarce restrain or mitigate the tumult:

It rages yet unsettled as the deep,
 Whose curling billows roll their whitening foam,
 And lash the sounding shore, altho' the storm
 Which rais'd the watry war be hush'd to peace.

ZORAIDA.

Will nothing less secure my life, and safety?
 Then cast me forth, to destiny abandon me,
 And leave me unprotected to support
 The rigour of my fortune.

SELIM.

Is your heart

To Selim then so adverse? Must he see
 That angel form, enchanting as the maids,
 Th' immortal maids who deck the banks of Zenzibil,
 By ruffians mangled?—yet while hope remains
 In time reflect—my bed, my throne, I offer.

ZORAIDA.

My soul is fix'd.

SELIM.

Then teach me how to save thee.

When you incens'd conspirators shall find
 That Selim has deceiv'd them, they will urge
 With fresh impatience their accurs'd demand.

ZORAIDA.

And let them urge it. Cover'd with the pansoply
 Of conscious innocence, my soul disdains
 Their savage cruelty. Let Death approach
 In every fearful, every ghastly form,
 With which inventive cruelty can robe

His

His terrifying semblance, to preserve
My faith unspotted dauntless will I meet him.

SE L I M.

Heroic fortitude! Thou shalt not die.
By all my hopes of paradise, I swear
To stem this torrent which o'erflows its banks,
Or bravely fall o'erwhelm'd amid its surge! *[Exit.]*

Z O R A I D A.

When shall I know a period to my sorrows?
Oh had Abdallah suffer'd me to fall
A victim to the perfidy of those
Whose malice fought to take my infant life!—
But be thy will, mysterious heav'n, accomplish'd.
Not all the pow'r of inauspicious fate,
Not all the terrors of a thousand deaths,
Shall shake my bosom, there Almaimon triumphs,
And while life's crimson animates these veins,
No second love my constancy shall know,
But my last sigh expiring breathe his name.

A C T IV

SCENE I.

The tent of Zoraida.

Enter ZOR A I D A.

HOW fatally delusive are the dreams,
The golden dreams of happiness, which flatter
Unhappy mortals with fantastic hopes
That ne'er must know completion! Pow'rs of heav'n!
For what am I reserv'd—Yet come what may
One comfort still is mine; my lord Almaimon
Is safe remov'd from danger—But behold,
With downcast mein, and eye in tears suffus'd,
Where Zulima returns; her looks declare
My doom is fix'd, and Azrael waits his prey.

SCENE

SCENE II.

Enter Zulima.

ZORAIDA.

Thou need'st not tell me that the soldiers phrenzy
Still mocks restraint, and clamours for my life
Thy weeping eyes my destiny reveal.

ZULIMA.

Alas, my injur'd friend! far other griefs
Conspire against your happiness; at length
The demon of adversity has lanc'd
His sharpest arrow.

ZORAIDA.

Whence these fatal words?

This horror on thy brow?

ZULIMA.

I cannot speak;

Grief choaks my pow'rs of utterance.

ZORAIDA.

Give it way,

And end this horrible suspense.

ZULIMA.

Almaimon—

ZORAIDA.

Almaimon—mercy—Speak—

ZULIMA.

Is murder'd.

ZORAIDA.

Murder'd!

Strike, strike me to the ground some pitying angel!

ZULIMA.

Would I had slept in everlasting peace,
Ere my sad eyes the dreadful sight had view'd,
Had seen that honor'd form, whose bloody robe
Too well I knew, disfigur'd all with wounds.

Z O.

ZORAIDA.

Enough; the measure of my woes is full,
And heav'n has seal'd my doom—I will not weep;
Down, swelling sorrow.

ZULIMA.

Do not look so wildly.

Oh patience, princefs, patience!

ZORAIDA.

Patience, saidst thou?

Talk'st thou of patience?—Yes, I will be patient,
Not one sad sigh shall heave my struggling bosom.

ZULIMA.

Yet stand not thus in speechless grief absorb'd,
With looks that speak unutterable anguish.
Perhaps my sire, Moralmín, has encounter'd
An equal fate; his venerable form
Perhaps lies mangled; to the birds of heav'n
A destin'd victim; yet I do not charge
The skies with cruelty, but bear my lot
With patient resignation.

ZORAIDA.

Dost thou talk

Of resignation to a wretch so curst,
So agoniz'd as I am? Hence, vain comforter!
Nor mock my sorrows more.—Away—my soul
Is mated to despair.—Thou parent earth, [Falling down.
Receive thy wretched daughter! On thy bosom
Here will I lie, and drown thee with my tears,
Till thou entomb me in eternal rest.

ZULIMA.

Oh scene of matchless woe! behold her droop,
Like some fair blossom, which the winds of heav'n
Have torn in anger from its parent tree,
And to the dust hurl'd prostrate.

A TRAGEDY.

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ZORAIDA *half rising.*

Saidst thou murder'd?

All mangled too! Some pitying pow'r untune
Each lab'ring sense, hurl headlong from her throne
Uprooted reason! Come, terrific madness!
Come, let me clasp thee! In thy native fierceness
Clothe my wild eye-balls, fire my heated brain,
And let the ravings of my frantic lips
Become my desperation!

ZULIMA.

Dwell not, princess,

Oh dwell not thus, in fearful meditation,
On sorrows irretrievable. Exert
The native energy of noble minds,
And rise superior—

ZORAIDA.

Woman! canst thou free me

From memory's scorpion sting? Controul the course
Of Destiny and Death, or wake the slain
To second being? No; release me, heav'n!
Release a wretch to misery predestin'd,
And in the tomb, beside my murder'd lord,
Let my pale corse be laid!

ZULIMA.

Accursed Osman!

This is thy cruelty.

ZORAIDA.

Vindictive light'nings

Blast his perfidious head! Stern pow'r's of vengeance!
Since nor distress nor innocence can bend
Your flinty rigour, be severely just
And strike him to the center! From your dens,
Ye blackest demons, rise, his double heart
Haunt with your furies; place before his view
His aggravated crimes, then drag him down
To everlasting punishment!

[Exeunt.]

F

SCENE

SCENE III.

*The grave.**Enter* OSMAN.*At length,*

The hour is come, appointed to disclose
 The plan my enmity anew has fram'd
 To signalize our vengeance. Thro' the camp
 All now is quiet as th' unruffled ocean,
 When not the whisper of the gentlest zephyr
 Fans its cerulean breast. The slave I rob'd
 In semblance of Almamon, and cast forth
 A victim to the soldiers, has amus'd
 The wrath of Selim, and appear'd at once
 Their thirst of blood—But see, Almamon comes—
 By heav'n, the Sultan!

[Retiring.]

SCENE IV.

Enter Selim and Heli.

SELIM.

Heli, bid the guards

Await at distance. Osman, whither haste you?

OSMAN *aside.*

I cannot frame a semblance of excuse,
 The sense of guilt confounds me—Here, retir'd,
 Your lowly slave—

SELIM,

Was plotting to ensnare

His unsuspecting lord: behold the place,
 Fix'd to concert your dastardly attempt.
 Thou base ingrate! whose specious shew of duty,
 And forward love, were faithless as the scabbard,
 Whose costly surface glitters to the sight
 With harmless splendor, while its bosom hides

The murd'ring fabre ; is my generous trust,
My favour, thus repay'd ?

OSMAN

What envious villain

Has dar'd traduce my honor to my lord,
And fill his bosom with suspicion ?

SELIM.

Osman,

He is the villain who has wrong'd thy worth.
That scroll you gave to Mirza—

OSMAN *starting.*

Has the slave

Betray'd my trust ! May torments seize the villain !

SELIM.

And dares the wretch, who gave the dire example,
Dares he exclaim against that breach of faith
His perfidy gave cause to ?

OSMAN.

I nor mean

To brave, or varnish my acknowledg'd crime ;
But, since my life is forfeited, will meet
My lot as fits a soldier. Haste, and call
Your ministers of fate ; to instant death
Let me be doom'd.

SELIM.

Ungrateful ! think'st thou Selim

Delights in blood ? Altho' his nod determines
The fate of millions, know, his soul disdains
The wild barbarity of Eastern monarchs,
Whose thrones are crufted with their subjects' gore.
No, gracious heav'n ! let him be lov'd, not dreaded ;
And, like the sun, where'er his name is heard,
Beam forth his chearing radiance. By the joys
Of paradise I swear, that to regain
A subject's lost fidelity, appears

A nobler triumph in the eye of Selim,
Than Egypt conquer'd, or the world subdued !

O S M A N.

O magnanimity ! surpassing far
Whate'er tradition, thro' th' admiring East,
Of thy august progenitors records,
Or praises in our Prophet. Gracious lord !
How has thy slave deserv'd this condescension !
If e'er henceforth I swerve from my allegiance,
May the keen bolt of everlasting justice
Transfix me here a terrible example !

S E L I M.

This fervour speaks the meltings of contrition.
Error is human frailty ; but the man
Who, once misguided, leaves the devious wild
In which he stray'd, and traces back his steps
To where on high her banner glory waves,
Like day's effulgent orb, when dim eclipse
Has veil'd his beaming front, recovers soon
His pristine lustre, and his former course
Triumphantly resumes. Again thy Lord
Receives thee to his favour ; but beware,
Nor more abuse his trust ; a second treason
No pardon meets. Henceforth be first in fame ;
Compell the nations, with united homage,
To bend submissive to the Moslem crescent,
And, by redoubled loyalty, erase
This guilty spot which stains thy former deeds. [Exit.

O S M A N.

How oft, amid the mazes which perplex
Our wand'ring footsteps thro' this thorny vale,
This wilderness of life, do erring mortals
Change their bewilder'd track ?— That deed my folly
Esteem'd an act of justice, while revenge
Inflam'd my breast ; now, reason thro' my mind
Beaming conviction, to my view appears

An impious murder.—Yet, altho' Almalmon
Must hope no more my aid, I will not leave him
Beset with perils; but, as fits a soldier,
Persuade him calmly to submit to Selim,
Or find some means to save him from the precipice
On which he stands.

S C E N E V.

Enter Almalmon.

ALMAIMON.

I joy to find thee, Osman:

Th' appointed hour is past, and minutes now,
When ev'ry moment teems with unknown fate,
Appear like tedious ages. Ha! what mean
These downcast looks? When ardent expectation,
Recovering from her trance, refits her plumes,
And upward soaring on extended pinion,
Beholds the goal of liberty, what means
This eye of caution?

OSMAN.

All your hopes are vanish'd;

The sultan has discover'd our intention.
But now, advancing unawares, while anxious
I waited your arrival, to my face
He urg'd my dark conspiracy, forgave
With condescending goodness, unimplor'd,
My foul presumption, and confirm'd my pardon.
Henceforth my soul abjures all thoughts of vengeance.

ALMAIMON.

Did you not vow you ne'er would taste of pleasure
'Till in his heart your scymetar was drench'd?

OSMAN.

Rather this arm should drench it in my own,
My vow is cancell'd; not the faithful needle
With more devoted constancy, unwearied,
Points to its pole, than henceforth my allegiance

Shall

Shall point to Selim with unalter'd truth.

ALMAIMON.

Perfidious traitor! Oh, deluded fool!

To think the slave who forfeited his first,

His natural allegiance, would forego

His wonted infidelity, or prove

More faithful to a second?

OSMAN.

Prince, be calm;

I am no traitor—True it is, misled

By enmity and prejudice, I fought

My gen'rous master's life; but heav'n at length

Has kindly drawn th' impenetrable veil

Which barr'd my prospect. Were I that base wretch

Thy indignation paints, I had not rested

Thus boldly here to vindicate my honour,

But with your blood had ratified my peace.

ALMAIMON.

Hence from my sight, equivocating slave!

Now by the head of Mahomet I swear,

To such a caitiff ere I owe my safety,

Ten thousand torments—

OSMAN.

Hear me yet, Almaimon;

Nor thus permit these violent emotions

To bear you from yourself. Attempt no longer

To struggle with your stars; the sultan glories

To raise a vanquish'd foe—Submit to fate—

ALMAIMON.

Hell and destruction! am I fall'n so low

That dastard traitors treat me with contempt?

Avoid my presence! ere, too far incens'd,

I stain my sabre with thy treach'rous blood,

And tread thee into dust.

OSMAN.

Vain-glorious boast!

No longer will I parley; with contempt

I hear these idle menaces. Know, prince,
 The man who sees, and dares confess his errors,
 Can never act ignobly: in compassion,
 I would have sav'd thee from impending ruin;
 But since with scorn you treat my proffer'd friendship,
 My soul is free—that ruin on thy head. [Exit.

ALMAIMON.

And let it crush me—fix'd I stand to brave
 The malice of my fortune. What resolve
 Becomes me now, what deed of desperation?
 I cannot think—my rage o'erpow'rs my reason—
 Not the wild uproar of Arabia's wastes,
 When from their bed, by whirlwinds torn, her sands
 Are hurl'd tempestuous, can express the chaos,
 The dire confusion of conflicting passions,
 That drive across my brain. This, this alone
 My soul determines, never to forego
 Her purpose of revenge, tho' earth and hell
 League all their pow'rs confederated to thwart me,
 'Till my good sword has done me ample justice,
 And freed Zoraida from her cruel bondage. [Exit.

SCENE VI.

Zoraida discovered on a sofa in her tent, in melancholy attitude. Zulima attending.

ZORAI DA.

O memory! thou aggravated curse
 Of wretched minds, why thou, with busy pencil,
 Dost thou, incessant, trace upon my brain
 A thousand images of former joy,
 Of golden pleasures past, when fortune smil'd,
 And ev'ry moment wafled as it roll'd,
 Increase of blessings! Terrible reverse
 Of inauspicious fate! My sun is set,
 My light is gone for ever.

ZULIMA.

Still that being,
Whose prescience penetrates our inmost thoughts,
May in due season merciful reward
Your due submission to his high decrees.

ZORAI DA.

Not heav'n itself can heal the woes I feel,
Unless the grave, its marble jaws unfolding,
Resign its shrouded clay. Ye talking dervises!
Ye solitary moralists! who dream
Of woes ye ne'er experienc'd, what avail
Your haughty vaunts of apathy to vanquish,
Or grapple with despair? Your boasted firmness,
Did you, like me, the giant fiend encounter,
As morning dew beneath the eye of day,
Would instantaneous into ether melt,
And ye would fall as I do.

ZULIMA.

Stay these tears,
And pierce beyond this transitory being,
To those abodes where ev'ry storm is hush'd,
And all is peace and permanent repose.

ZORAI DA.

Oh that my soul to those auspicious climes
Could wing her silent way! Tyrannic Azraël!
Thou last resource of sorrow-lab'ring mortals!
Still wilt thou bar, with unrelenting arm,
Against the passage of each wearied wretch
The thousand portals, whose wide-yawning jaws
Lead to thy dismal mansion; while around
The laughing circles of the young and gay,
Whose jocund hours, on downy pinions floating,
Dance to the trills of pleasure's melting lute,
Thou shak'st thy flaming sabre!—

[After a pause.]

Whence this light
Whose sudden influence darts across my mind,

Bright

Bright and resistless as the light celestial,
 Whose piercing radiance in Medina's cave
 Illum'd the prophet's breast. This sudden impulse
 Is sure imprinted by the hand of heav'n,
 And I obey its dictates. Glorious thought!
 Haste thee, my Zulima, to Heli haste,
 And bid him say to Selim, that Zoraida
 Requests his presence in her tent.

ZULIMA.

What means
 This sudden fervour, darting from your eye?
 Some deadly purpose—

ZORAIDA.

Ask not my intent,
 But haste, and shew thy friendship. [Exit Zul.]

Judge eternal!

O prove propitious to the great design
 My heart has fram'd, and I with joy shall quit
 The narrow precincts of this vale of sorrow.
 Be fix'd, Zoraida; let no shadowy terrors
 Affright thy breast, or make thee dread to act
 The glorious deed, whose fortitude shall strike
 Posterity with wonder, make fond maids,
 Thro' periods yet unborn, in carroll'd hymns
 Of admiration chaunt Zoraida's name,
 And point her out a miracle of truth.

G

A C T

ACT V.

SCENE I.

The grove and cell.

Enter from it Almalmon and Zirvad,

ZIRVAD speaking as they enter,

UNSTABLE mortal! object slave of passion!

The lightness of the Gossamer, which floats
On summer's noon, or unembodied vapour
Of ev'ry blast the sport, resembles well
Thy boasted fortitude.

ALMAIMON.

I own my weakness;

But my torn heart no longer can sustain
This painful strife. My sorrows have unmann'd me;
My nerves relax, my resolution sinks,
And I resign me to your dread displeasure,
Remorseless pow'rs!

ZIRVAD.

Unmanly resignation!

Distress and peril are the tests to try
True fortitude and wisdom; such the lot
To which the sov'reign mandate of the Highest
Has pre-ordain'd mortality. This scene
Of frail existence, changeful as the pictures
Fashion'd from clouds, whose variegated borders
O'erspread the vault of ev'ning, to the eye
Presents incessant new, fantastic prospects,
Where joy and sorrow, with alternate pencil,
Pourtray the chequer'd landscape. Shake then, shake
This languor from you; think that no condition,
However desp'rate, is beyond the pow'r
Of Providence to remedy.

A T R A G E D Y.

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ALMAIMON.

But Providence
Laughs at my woes. Omnipotent Disposer!
For what unknown, unexpiated crime,
Am I set up thy monument of vengeance—

ZIRVAD.

Oh death to piety! Is this the language
Befitting frail mortality? Thou know'st
Our suff'rings are predestin'd; no event
Chequers our fortune, but upon the tablet
Of destiny by Azrael is grav'd,
And not to be avoided.

ALMAIMON.

Yes, too plain
I see my doom is fix'd, and thus I yield
Willing obedience to the stern decree. [*As he draws his sabre*]

S C E N E II.

Enter MORALMIN, and catches hold of his arm.

Defend me, heav'n! What means my gracious master?
Oh shame to glory! Is it thus Almaimon
Avenge his lost warriors, whose brave spirits
With indignation call aloud on thee,
To vindicate their fall upon the heads
Of these rapacious spoilers. What, although
Zoraida be abandon'd and perfidious—

ALMAIMON.

Ha! false! perfidious! didst thou say Zoraida?

MORALMIN.

'Tis but the nature of th' inconstant sex;
Light and unstable, as the crested foam
Which rides the dancing surge. The throne of love
On perfidy is founded, and the man
Who trusts too credulous his faith to beauty,
Must look to be deceiv'd.

ALMAIMON.

What impious falshood !

Where wouldst thou drive me ?—Ha ! beware ! the wretch
Who dares traduce her——

MORALMIN.

Would there were no cause ;

But give her up to that supreme contempt
Her conduct merits. She is lost beyond
All pow'r to save, to infamy consign'd,
Betroth'd to Selim.

ALMAIMON.

Horror ! and despair !

Betroth'd to Selim ! She ! Zoraida, sayst thou ?
Then force, or fraud——

MORALMIN.

No, arm'd with all th' allurements

Which artful women practise to deceive us,
Since last we met too certain have I learn'd
She urg'd the wond'ring sultan to their nuptials.

ALMAIMON.

What she !—Perdition !—She !—I'll not believe it.

ZIRVAD.

Nor I ; some villain foully has traduc'd
Her spotless virtue, and abus'd Moralmin.

MORALMIN.

Oh would it were so ! but the fatal truth
Too firmly is establish'd. While we speak,
Perhaps this moment, in the mosque the trait'ers
Seals the connubial bond. I saw it deck'd
With flaunting garlands, saw the Imans rob'd
In snowy vests, and heard th' assembling crowd
Exclaim, with shouts of joyous exultation,
Long live the sultan, and his beauteous empress !

ALMAIMON.

What ! in that temple where so oft the vow'd
To know no second passion—But their league

With blood shall be cemented. Yes, thou hypocrite!
More wily than the crocodile—Yet hold
Tormented sense, nor burst indignant heart,
Till my avenging scymetar has offer'd
Her mangled corpse a victim—

MORALMIN.

Whither haste you?

ALMAIMON.

To yon dire scene—

MORALMIN.

Yet hear me, royal master,

Oh do not suffer these tumultuous passions

To overpow'r your reason, nor misled

By fever'd fancy—

ALMAIMON.

Hence, you plead in vain.

ZIRVAD.

You rush on certain death.

ALMAIMON.

'Tis what I mean—away—opposing myriads

Shall not with-hold me from my destin'd purpose.

MORALMIN.

What dire resolve, in fatal phrenzy form'd—

ALMAIMON.

I know not what—Love, jealousy, disdain,

Tumultuous kindling, with alternate breath

Exasperate the torments which consume me,

And set my heart in flames. But full of horror,

As suits my desperation, shall it be,

And public as her guilt. [Exit.

MORALMIN.

Methinks the angel

Of desolation, for some crime unknown,

Visits the land in terrors, and decrees

The fall of Egypt.—But laments are fruitless.

Swift let me fly, collect some faithful friends,
 And by my care prevent or share his fate. *[Exit.]*

ZIRVAD.

The fatal crisis which I so much dreaded
 Advances cloath'd in terrors. — Now the wrong
 Which erst I did Zoraida, on my head
 Recoils with tenfold vengeance. To the mosque,
 Fast as the steps of trembling age permit,
 Immediate will I haste; tho' instant death
 Should follow my confession, I will ease
 My troubled conscience, and submissive wait
 The dread behest of everlasting justice. *[Exit.]*

SCENE III.

A chamber.

Enter ZULIMA.

Oh day of horror! whither shall I turn
 Amid this endless labyrinth of doubts
 In which I wander? wretched, lost Zoraida!
 Wilt thou then wed Almainon's direst foe?
 So fix'd I held thy dignity of soul,
 I thought thy virtue would have spurn'd a world,
 Bought at the price of honor. — Still my heart
 Refuses to believe her faithless. — No,
 The pangs she strives in vain to hide, betray
 Th' emotions of her mind. — She cannot mean
 In truth to seal that hymeneal vow,
 Then only pleasing to the blushing virgin,
 When heav'n unites her to the favour'd youth
 Her heart has chosen.

SCENE IV.

Enter HELI.

Zulima, by me

The sultan greets the princess, and requests
 Her instant presence at the mosque, where rang'd

In

A TRAGEDY.

53

In festive pomp, th' officiating Imams
The nuptial rites already have commenc'd.

ZULIMA.

Follow my steps, and I will bring you to her.
Where will this end? preserve her, guardian spirits!

SCENE V.

*The inside of a magnificent mosque, adorn'd with garlands,
and festoons of flowers.*

Enter ALMAIMON.

By heav'n! this marriage was no well-forg'd tale
Invented by Moralphin. No, this pomp
Of festal preparation, speaks too plainly
Zoraida's infidelity.—And hark! *[Vocal music is heard within
the inner mosque.*

These choral strains that issue from the mosque
Proclaim the rites begun—Conceal'd a while
Behind some friendly covert will I watch,
Fierce as a lion couching for his prey,
Then rush upon them unawares, and change
These notes of joy to shrieks of lamentation. *[He retires.*

SCENE VI.

*From the inner mosque, enter in procession, on one side the
Imams, on the other the women with wreaths of flowers,
singing the following epithalamium—Between them Selim,
Zoraida, Zulima, Heli, &c. Behind, officers, guards, and
attendants.*

CHORUS.

From your spheres, ye sons of light!
Guardian spirits! speed your flight;
Round us floating on the wing,
Listen to the strains we sing;
Strains your ears may well approve,
Strains of triumph, strains of love.

Haste,

Haste, and with you garlands bring;
 Cull'd from flow'rs which deathless spring
 Where the spicy dew distill,
 On the banks of Zenzibil.
 Haste, unite the plighted pair,
 Mighty victor, matchless fair.

FIRST AIR.

Lord of kings, his brandish'd rod
 Bows the nations to his nod;
 His triumphant glory spread
 Far as Nile's capacious bed;
 Emulates th' immortal fame,
 Which enshrin'd the prophet's name,
 When his arm at Honein's field,
 Forc'd the rebel tribes to yield.

SECOND CHORUS.

Louder swell th' inspiring sound,
 Conquest is with beauty crown'd.

SECOND AIR.

Beauty as the Hour is bright,
 Who, in gardens of delight,
 Rob'd with everlasting youth,
 Charms celestial, virgin truth,
 Underneath the luscious vine,
 In pavilions green recline,
 Where believers true enjoy
 Bliss which never knows to cloy.

THIRD CHORUS.

Haste, unite the plighted pair,
 Mighty victor, matchless fair*.

* As the whole Epithalamium was judged too long for representation,
 only the first chorus, the first air, and second chorus were set to music.

SELIM.

Blest be this day in which my better stars
 Beam forth their brightest energy, and yield
 The fair Zoraida to my wishes. Come, *[Taking hold of
 her hand,*
 My destin'd empress, let us now prepare
 To seal that union——

ZORAIDA *breaking from him,*

Tyrant, give me way!

Sooner the chariot of the sun shall quit
 Its constant course, than hymeneal ties
 Unite our fates. Away, nor think to pass
 Those everlasting, adamantine bars,
 Which heav'n has plac'd between us. Hence and leave me;
 To gain my purpose I but feign'd compliance.

SELIM.

Amazement all! what means this sudden phrenzy!

ZORAIDA.

To die, to die, and meet my murder'd lord!

[Shewing a dagger,

Couldst thou believe Zoraida, who can boast
 Almaimon's love, would ever condescend
 To wed another? Chastity, forbid it!
 Forbid it conscious honor! Hear me, Selim,
 But that my soul, as worthy of its daring,
 Before these Imaus, in the face of heav'n,
 My resolute fidelity to prove
 With secret pride aspir'd, and leave my sex
 A memorable pattern, I had freed
 E'er this my spirit from its load of woe.

SELIM.

Oh fatal madness! thus to rush uncall'd
 To death's dark gates, when pleasure in thy path
 Strews her fresh roses. No, thou canst not mean it;

H

'Tis but to prove the fervour of my love.

Swift let me free thee from this baleful weapon. [*Approaching.*]

ZORAI DA:

Off! come not near me, or I strike this moment.

Deemst thou me then so despicably vile,

To every virtuous sentiment which crowns

Our sex so lost, to share thy throne, and pow'r,

When my affections, to another wedded,

Loathe the pollution?—No, from these dire nuptials

Thus I release me—— [*Lifting the dagger, at that instant*

ALMAIMON *bursting from his concealment.*

Stay thy frantic hand,

Dear injur'd excellence! nor rashly draw

Perdition headlong on us both. Behold,

By heav'n preserv'd, thy fond Almaimon lives,

ZORAI DA *in astonishment at his voice, dropping the dagger.*

Sure some bright vision mocks my cheated senses!

Eternal heav'n! it is, it is Almaimon!

My lord, my hero, whom with many a tear

I wept as murder'd.

ALMAIMON.

Do I thus enfold thee!

Now wing thy shafts, commiserating Azraël!

Now, while my spirit wrapt in blissful vision—

SELIM.

Thou desperate intruder! who hast dar'd

To rush into our presence, and defy

The pond'rous stroke of that uplifted arm,

Whose weight would crush thee; say, art thou Almaimon?

ALMAIMON.

Yes, tyrant, know me for the lord of Egypt,

Thy everlasting foe.

SELIM.

'Tis well, thou insolent!

By the seven heav'ns, and all the varied glories

Th' enraptur'd Prophet saw, when, led by Gabriel,

He pass'd their flaming boundaries, I swear,
Wert thou hedg'd round with myriads of thy friends
Thou shouldst not 'scape my vengeance. Call the mutes,
And cast him to their fury. [Exit Heli.

ALMAIMON.

Let them come;
Arm'd with the mail of fortitude, I scorn
Thy impotence of rage. One glorious triumph
Is left me still, surpassing all thy conquests,
Whose sweet reflection sooths the pangs of death.

ZORAIDA.

Talk not of death; I cannot, will not lose thee.
Oh, if in truth thou ever didst regard
Zoraida with affection, mercy, mercy! [Kneeling to Selim.
By thy own trust in heav'n's forgiving goodness
Have mercy now, and save my dear Almailmon.

SELIM.

Away, away! this ill-tim'd pray'r but speeds
His pre-determin'd doom.

ZORAIDA.

I will not leave you,
Till you regard me with the soft'ned eye
Of merciful indulgence! Wilt thou heap
Distresses on my head, and crush the wretched,
Whom sharp affliction's iron yoke hath bow'd?
Oh no, I rave, my agonies distract me!
Thy magnanimity, I know, will scorn
Such mean revenge, nor perpetrate a deed,
The livid cheek of cowardice would blush at.

SCENE VII.

Enter on one side Heli with the mutes; on the other side

Zirvad.

SELIM.

Your pray'rs are vain—such insolent demeanour
No pity merits.—Instant do your office.

[The mutes seize Almailmon.

ZORAIDA, *rising.*

Inhuman monster! if thou must have blood
Here sate thy thirst! behold my willing neck
Stretch'd for the cord; but torrents of thine own,
Tyrant! shall pay for every crimson drop
Drawn from his veins. Hereafter o'er thy realm
Vengeance shall drive his flaming wheels——

SELIM.

Regard not
Her idle ravings, but obey my mandate,
Or your own heads shall instant pay the forfeit.
[The mutes endeavour to force Almaimon off the stage.]

ZORAIDA *catching hold of his robe.*

Is there no remedy?—Away, barbarians!
Murderers, stand off! ye shall not tear him from me;
Give me the bow-string, flinty-hearted ruffians!
But spare my lord, my hero! Fury! madness!
Distraction! and despair!

ZIRVAD.

Hold, cruel men!
Hold, nor attempt to touch that sacred life.

SELIM.

Ha! who art thou hast dar'd to intercept
A victor's vengeance? Hence, presumptuous Dervise!
Hence, or thy age and office shall avail not
To screen thee from our rage.

ZIRVAD.

I cannot go;
I am th' appointed minister of Alha,
And must declare the mandate I am charg'd with.
Ere at the court of Bajazet, thy fire,
I liv'd dependant on Abdallah's bounty,
Entrusted as his friend, and now am come
By heav'n commission'd——

SELIM.

SELIM.

Ha! Abdallah's friend!

Said'st thou Abdallah's?

ZIRVAD.

Yes, Abdallah's friend,

The faithful Vizir of imperial Bajazet,
 Whose zeal preserv'd from imminent destruction
 Zoraida's infant life.

SELIM.

Mysterious heav'n!

Sav'd by Abdallah? She! Zoraida, sayst thou?

ZIRVAD.

In that dire night when Bajazet was slain,
 By his protection was she snatch'd from peril.

SELIM.

Say whence she drew her lineage? Instant say—
 On a steep precipice—

ZULIMA.

That none can tell;

His letters vouch'd her from a line descended
 Of noble ancestry; but kept conceal'd
 The authors of her being.

SELIM.

Did he send

No mystic pledge, no token, might conduce
 To indicate her parentage?

ZULIMA.

He did;

But the perfidious and inhuman traitor,
 To whose protection, in that hour of danger,
 Her infancy was trusted, basely robb'd
 The casket of its treasures, and expos'd
 The hapless princess at a peasant's door,
 Unshelter'd, unprotected, to depend
 On casual bounty.

ZIR-

ZIRVAD.

True, he did ; I know it,
 And well he merits these opprobrious titles.
 Nay wonder not ; for I am he, that traitor,
 Who foully stole this precious pledge, and spoil'd
 The orphan of its treasure.

ALMAIMON.

Thou, good Dervise !
 Thou rav'st ; the woes thou feelt thy master suffer
 Have turn'd thy brain.

ZIRVAD.

No, gracious lord, too well
 I know the purport of that dire confession
 My lips but now have utter'd. List then all,
 Attentive list, while, forrowing, I unfold
 That secret load of guilt, I had resolv'd,
 Till my last moments, never to reveal,
 So much the sense of ignominy aw'd
 My conscious spirit ; but when I beheld
 The danger of my sovereign and the princess,
 Alike regardless then of fame, or life,
 I flew to stop these inauspicious rites,
 And all I knew relate. Nor thou disdain,
 Victorious Sultan, to incline thine ear,
 And listen to a story, which, perforce,
 Will make thee own I am indeed to thee
 The minister of heav'n.—Zoraida——

SELIM.

What?

Speak, instant speak ; my blood is all in tumults,
 And wildly throbs——

ZIRVAD.

Zoraida—is—thy sister.

SELIM.

Eternal heav'n ! the bodings of my heart
 Are then confirm'd !

AL-

ALMAIMON.

Zoraida Selim's sister !

ZIRVAD.

From Bajazet descended. In that night
 When he was foully murder'd, good Abdallah
 Her infant form entrusted to my duty,
 And, by the name of Mahomet, conjur'd me
 To place her safe in Almorad's protection.

ALMAIMON.

But you, seduc'd by thirst of gold, abus'd
 Abdallah's confidence.

ZIRVAD.

I own my crime

With mingled shame and sorrow. If a doubt
 Should yet remain, behold this golden bracelet,
 The secret pledge by good Abdallah sent,
 To prove Zoraida's birth ; it holds a token
 The breast of Selim will with joy acknowledge.

SELIM.

Quick let me see it—What behold I here ?
 The lineaments of Zara ! 'Tis her image,
 My mother's well-known form. Yes, fair Zoraida,
 Thou art my sister ! my exulting heart
 With joy acknowledges the tender tie,
 And springs to meet thee.

ZORAIDA.

Does the blood of Bajazet

These veins replenish ? Am I then no longer
 A wretched orphan ? Scarce my soul can credit
 The wonders she beholds. Yet one request
 Remains to crown my happiness ; by all
 The tender pleadings of a sister's accents,
 Oh hear me, Selim, let my dear Almaimon,
 The friend, the guide, the guardian of my youth,
 My bosom's lord, participate with me

Your

Your unreserv'd affection, and our union
By thy assent be sanctify'd.

SE L I M.

With joy
I seal the holy bond. Yes, gen'rous prince,
Whose bounty rear'd this lovely flow'r, expos'd
To perish ere its prime, or waste its sweetness
And bloom unseen in solitude, receive
Thy bright reward in her angelic beauty.
Altho' to tear a passion from my heart,
Engraven deep in ev'ry panting fibre,
May prove a painful struggle; yet, since heav'n,
And honour both, forbid our nuptial union,
To thee I yield her. From this hour united
In strictest league of amity, our arms,
Like blended torrents, undivided rolling
In one promiscuous channel, shall controul
The subjugated East, and fair Zoraida
Cement our mutual friendship.

A L M A I M O N.

Art thou mine?

Mine by the sanction of a brother's grant?
I shall grow wild with rapture. Bounteous Alha!
Like our own Nile on Egypt's parching meads
Prolific falling, thy returning favour
Descends in mercies that tenfold repay
My former suff'rings; and from hence shall teach me
Ne'er to distrust thy providence, which oft,
When suffering mortals in despair esteem
Their woes past cure, miraculously guides
Our salt'ring steps to happiness, and gives
A nobler rapture to returning joy,
By recollection of our past disasters.

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

E P I.

E P I L O G U E,

By the AUTHOR of the Piece.

Spoken by Mrs. YATES.

*WELL, thank my stars! no more an Eastern bride,
With joy I lay my pageantry aside,
And come, my sex's advocate, to claim
The sigh of pity for each Asian dame.
Secure, and blest, in this auspicious isle,
Ye little think, in Asia's sultry soil,
Ye favour'd fair! to what a wretched state
Woman is doom'd by unrelenting fate.
Give me your ear then, while I lay before ye
Our diff'rent lot, in plain and artless story;
For custom here, whose magic fetters bind,
In ev'ry clime, the subjugated mind,
The wrongs of beauty amply has redress'd,
And fix'd her empire in each willing breast.*

*Tho' thro' the East proud man, with lawless sway,
Despotic rules, while woman must obey;
Reverse the medal, and we here can shew
More abject vassals in each captive beau.
'Tis true, in Turkey, each three-tail'd Bashaw
Can keep a dozen mistresses in awe;
But in our isle a dozen lords will find
'Tis past their pow'r to keep one true, or kind.
With them 'tis held, our sex no soul inherit,
But British women are all soul and spirit,
Usurp the boldness of the manly air,
Look fierce, laugh loud, assume the strut, the stare;
While essenc'd coxcombs with unblushing face
Affect the softness of the female grace:
We cannot fight indeed I own, but then
No more can these half semblances of men.
What tho' in Asia each unhappy fair
Deny'd the birthright of her sex to share,
Wedded, or single, is a slave for life;
The palm is ours, while ev'ry modish wife*

Can

E P I L O G U E.

}

Can laugh in England at all ties design'd,
 In sweet restraint, to hold th' enamour'd mind,
 And rove at will, unfetter'd as the wind.
 Let lynx-ey'd jealousy there ceaseless wake
 To trap the fair, if one false step she make;
 With us, thank heav'n! its tyranny is o'er,
 We may provide us lovers by the score;
 Or if perchance we fail to gain our ends,
 Our husbands will supply us from their friends.
 But shou'd our spouse prove cruel, or the fashion
 Demand th' indulgence of a second passion,
 The Commons soon can rid us of our pain,
 Sign our divorce, and make us maids again.

But, jest apart, tho' custom here has giv'n
 Our sex such pow'r as keeps the balance ev'n,
 One honest truth I boldly will maintain,
 And may the glory ever yours remain.
 If it alone in Britain can be said
 Such gen'rous homage to our sex is paid,
 As manly dignity with pride may give,
 Or free-born dames with honour can receive,
 Envy herself, reluctantly, must own,
 Whate'er our foibles, no where can be shewn
 More beauty, virtue, modesty, or sense,
 To merit and adorn pre-eminence.
 May then that pow'r, which, arm'd in mercy's cause,
 Ever ensures obedience to its laws,
 Be kindly now exerted to befriend
 The Poet's labours, and his fame defend!
 Our Bard, I know, will deem your fav'ring smile
 An ample retribution for his toil;
 Let but his orphan find a guardian here,
 And, tho' an alien, she has nought to fear:
 Zoraida, once adopted for your own,
 May scorn the splendour of an Eastern throne.

POSTSCRIPT,

CONTAINING

OBSERVATIONS

ON

TRAGEDY.



O B S E R V A T I O N S

O N

T R A G E D Y.

OF every species of authors, whose aim is either to instruct or entertain the Public, the Dramatic Writer, from the nature of his subject, is most critically situated. The Poet who composes for the closet, as he addresses himself only to the judicious, *φανερά* *σοφιστοί*, and expects to stand or fall by their suffrage, has only to make the best use of his abilities, according to the most established rules of good writing. But the Dramatic Poet, as he writes for the Public (a mixed audience of different dispositions, prejudices, acquirements, and pursuits) appeals to, and is judged by the Public, often upon a single hearing, must at all events please the Public, if he expects to gain the applause of the theatre; yet this, in itself no easy task, is but one part of his labour; for if he wishes to survive in the closet, he must have another end in view, which clashes so much with the former, as to render their union an object of no small exertion and difficulty. On the stage (on the English stage at least) the principal, I had almost said the sole appeal, is to the passions; in the closet, the principal appeal is to the judgment. In the one case it is the heart we address, in the other the head; but the beauties by which the heart and the head are attracted, are generally so different, that to unite them, and compose a piece equally adapted to the closet and the theatre, has been held, from the example of so many Poets who have failed in one or other of these ends, an almost hopeless attempt for a genius less fertile than Shakespeare's. As this is a point of some importance, as well for the lovers, as writers of the drama, I hope I shall be pardoned, if I here employ a few pages in endeavouring to shew upon what a tragic Poet must place his chief dependence of success on the stage, and upon what in the closet; how far the union of these different views is compatible, and how they must be blended so as to produce, upon the whole, the greatest effect.

The foundation of Tragedy, considered not as a poem only but as a drama, and that which (according to Aristotle *) if any thing does, constitutes its essence, is to interest the affections, by exciting, in the most powerful degree, the emotions of pity and terror. When a Tragedy eminently possesses this excellence, it generally makes its way to the heart, however deficient it may be in point of character, sentiment, and diction. In the closet, indeed, if it want these latter beauties, it may fail; but in representation, let it agitate the heart, pierce it with terror, or melt it with pity, its effect will be irresistible. This is not an abstract

* Περὶ ποιητ. 2. 5.

speculation,

speculation, but the language of nature and experience, and consonant to the opinions of the most judicious critics, from Aristotle to the present time.

Ille per extentum funem mihi posse videtur
Ire poëta, meum qui pectus inaniter angit,
Irritat, mulcet, falsis terroribus implet
Ut magus, et modo me Thebis, modo ponit Athenis.

Two kinds
of emotion
raised by a
well-written
drama,

But, for the better developing this matter, let us reflect that there are two kinds of emotion which a well-planned and well-written drama is calculated to excite; one of which is felt by all who have sensible hearts, learned or unlearned; the other only by the cultivated few: of the first kind are all the emotions raised by those passions which are implanted in the heart of man by Providence, to counteract or remedy the slow exertions of the rational faculty; for often, before that faculty could determine on the propriety or impropriety of an action, the opportunity of performing it would be lost. These passions, therefore, are excited instinctively and anterior to reason, at the sight of beauty, virtue, oppression, guilt, distress, danger, &c. such are the passions of love, anger, hatred, fear, courage, with variety of others. Of the second kind are all those consequent upon reasoning and reflection: such is the pleasure a cultivated mind feels at the view of characters nicely discriminated, manners justly painted, energetic sentiment, and elegant diction; all which being the effect of cultivation and refinement, produce their effect only on the few who are cultivated and refined. The first I call natural, or instinctive passions; the second, as being the product of art and culture (though doubtless equally in nature with the first) I call, for want of a better word, artificial or reflective passions. Now the emotions which the reflective passions are calculated to excite, may be all summed up in one general term, Admiration; while the natural passions principally fill the heart with pity or terror. If the essence of Tragedy, then, be to raise the emotions of pity and terror, it must be by exhibiting such objects as are adapted to excite and engage the natural passions. Wherever these are not interested, however the reflective passions may be employed, the piece will infallibly languish in representation, it may indeed be a fine poem, but it is a bad Tragedy*.

* The same observation holds true in the sister arts of music and painting. In music, learned harmony, artful contrivance, laboured modulation; and in painting, the chiaro oscuro, the airs, attitudes, and grouping of figures, though strong proofs of the ingenuity and skill of the artist, and justly admired by all who are capable of understanding them, yet generally speak little or nothing to those not conversant in these arts; while natural, expressive melody, and passion well painted, attract every feeling mind cultivated or uncultivated. In dramatic poetry then, Tragedies, where manners instead of passion are the leading feature, may be compared to learned compositions in music and painting, which will seldom attract any except cultivated ears and eyes, however fine monuments of genius they may be; while Tragedies which, though deficient in character, and sentiment, abound in pathos, are analogous to compositions in music, and painting, whose leading feature is expression, which often without art or contrivance, and not unfrequently in defiance of propriety, are yet so affecting, as to bear down all opposition.

If

If we attend to this distinction, it will, I think, unfold the secret of Dramatic Writing, according as it is intended for the stage, or closet; and shew us the reason why some plays, which are very artificially written, and seldom read, yet upon the stage frequently draw tears; while others, which display far greater art in their composition, and are read with repeated delight in the closet, always weary in representation. It is because in the one the instinctive, in the other the reflective passions predominate; in the one terror or pity, in the other admiration is chiefly excited. Whenever the latter is the case, the body of the people, who make the bulk of the audience, and know nothing of the artifice of composition, but come to have their feelings roused by an affecting representation of distress, find themselves disappointed, and wearied; and so would the cultivated part of the audience too, if they had not a resource peculiar to themselves, but this resource, though extremely well adapted to be the principal feature in epic poetry (where admiration is chiefly intended to be excited) should hold only a secondary place in Tragedy; for here,

Non satis est pulchra esse poemata; dulcia sunto,
Et quocunque volunt animum auditoris agunto*.

It being granted then that the essence of Tragedy, considered as a Drama, is to call forth terror and pity, it will follow that the tragic poet, who writes with a view to representation, should make the fable the first great object of his attention. Aristotle was so convinced of this truth, that, of the six parts into which he divides Tragedy, he gives the preference so much to the fable, as to make it the only one indispensably necessary to its existence. "Tragedy"

* On the Grecian theatre Euripides is the strongest proof that he who has the art of securing the natural passions on his side bids fair for success in representation; for whoever takes the trouble of reading the 13th and 15th chapters of Aristotle's Poetics, will find him there censured as not only faulty in point of manners, and character, but as careless, irregular, and deficient, in the conduct of the fable; yet on account of his wonderful command over the passions, Aristotle himself, in the same place, does not scruple to call him the most tragic of all the poets, and Quintilian says of him, "In affectibus vero cum omnibus mirus, tum in iis qui miseratione constant precipuus." Among our own writers this character is, almost in every respect, applicable to Otway, who, though like Euripides, faulty in point of plot, and character, yet, like him, is such a master of each avenue to the heart, that he charms every hearer, and strikes us blind to his imperfections; while Ben Johnson's and Thomson's tragedies, with Comus, Caractacus, and variety of other beautiful pieces of composition, which do infinite honour to their authors as poets, flag in representation, because they all call forth (though not all by the same means) the reflective, rather than the natural passions, or in other words excite admiration instead of terror or pity. Even our immortal Shakespeare himself, if his only excellence had been his sublime poetry, or even his nicely drawn, and highly finished character, would never have attained the fame on the stage which he now possesses; but raising the emotions of terror and pity to their utmost energy in the theatre, and interesting equally in the closet by his other beauties of character, sentiment, and diction, all ranks and orders of men feel his supreme excellence, and cultivated, or uncultivated, have united in raising him to that eminence on which he stands unrivalled.

(says

(says he) " is an imitation not of men but their actions, of their life, their good or bad fortune, which consists in action. The end which men propose to themselves is always an action, not a quality. Manners are indeed the cause of such and such qualities; but mankind are happy or unhappy only by their actions. Tragedy then is not instituted to imitate manners, but manners are added to support the action, so that the action and fable are the end of Tragedy; now in all things the end is the most important. Add to this, that though a Tragedy cannot exist without a fable, it may without manners; for suppose any one should compose a piece where there should be several scenes, in which the manners should be perfectly well painted and supported by beautiful sentiment and elegant diction, he would not yet have attained the true design of Tragedy; while a piece, much inferior in all these respects, provided it has a well-planned and well-conducted fable, will answer its intent much sooner, and with much more effect *." The reason of this is exceedingly plain from the principle laid down; for as there is no terror or pity without surprize, that surprize I mean, which arises from events happening contrary to our expectation, yet so as not to pass the bounds of probability, it follows, that there is no means so powerful of raising terror or pity, as by the representation of an affecting story of distress, full of unexpected, yet natural and probable changes of fortune. From the principle laid down then, that the essence of Tragedy is to raise the emotions of terror and pity, not only the pre-eminence of the fable is established, but its principal attributes are marked; for if the action be either improbable in itself, or rendered so by the ill conduct of it; if, though probable, it is inartificial, and produces neither curiosity nor surprize; or if, being both probable and wonderful, it want interest and pathos, it must of course disgust the spectator, and languish in the representation. To make the fable, therefore, produce its whole effect, and give the passions their full play, it should unite at once the probable, the marvellous, and the pathetic †.

The three
essential
properties
of the fable.

Having

* *Ἀνάγκη ὅν πάσης τραγωδίας μέρη εἶναι εἶς, καθ' ἑκάστην τινος ἐστὶν ἡ τραγωδία, ταῦτα δ' ἐστὶν, μῦθος, καὶ ἦθος, καὶ λέξις, καὶ διανοία, καὶ ὄψις, καὶ μελοποιία. Μείγρον δὲ τῶν ἐστὶν ἡ τῶν πραγμάτων σύστασις· ἡ γὰρ τραγωδία μίμησις ἐστὶν ὅν ἀνθρώπων, ἀλλὰ πράξεων, καὶ βίῃ. καὶ εὐδαιμονίας καὶ κακοδαιμονίας, καὶ γὰρ ἡ εὐδαιμονία ἐν πρᾶξει ἐστὶ, καὶ τὸ τέλος πράξεως τίς ἐστιν, ἡ ποιοῦτος. εἰσὶ δὲ κατὰ μὲν τὰ ἦθη ποιοῖ τινες, κατὰ δὲ τὰς πράξεις εὐδαιμονοῦν, ἡ τὴν νῆαντιον, ὅν ὅν ὅπως τὰ ἦθη μιμήσονται, πρᾶξις, ἀλλὰ τὰ ἦθη συμπεριλαμβανουσιν διὰ τὰς πράξεις. ὥς τε τὰ πράγματα, καὶ ὁ μῦθος τέλος τῆς τραγωδίας. Τὸ δὲ τέλος μέγρον ἀπάντων ἐστὶν. Ἄνευ μὲν γὰρ πράξεως ὅν ἂν γένοιτο τραγωδία, ἄνευ δὲ ἦθων γένοιτο ἂν. Ἐπὶ ἅν τις ἐφεστὶς ὀνησις ἡδύκατος, καὶ λέξις, καὶ διανοίας εὐπεποιήμενας, ἡ ποιήσει ὅν τῆς τραγωδίας ἔργον, ἀλλὰ πᾶσι μᾶλλον ἡ καταδεδεγμένους τῶν τοῖς μετρημένην τραγωδία, ἔχουσα δὲ μῦθον καὶ σύστασιν πραγμάτων. Ἀριστοτ. περὶ ποιητ. κ. ε'.*

† Aristotle adds a farther proof of the pre-eminence of the fable from its difficulty. The most certain mark, says he, of the truth I have been establishing, is, that those who sit down to compose a Tragedy, find it much easier to succeed in the style and manners, than to digest well the subject; and this is consonant to the experience of almost all the old poets. (Ib. κ. ε'.) How

Having thus shewn upon what a tragic poet must place his chief Importance hope of success on the stage, we might proceed to point out what must of these pro- be the principal object of his attention, if he wishes to be read in perties of the closet; but as the due observation of the three above-mentioned the fable, properties of the fable is of the utmost importance to ensure its success, it may not be improper to say a word or two on each, especially, as under one or other of them may be ranked all the disputes which have arisen among critics concerning the management of the fable (as whether it should be simple or implex, single or double, happy or unhappy, how far the observation of the unities is necessary, &c.) A full discussion of any one of these points would take up more time than these few pages will admit; in some future period, if his health and leisure will permit him to arrange the materials he has been long collecting for a Treatise on English Poetry, the author of these pages proposes to consider the subject at full length; at present, he would only beg the Reader's permission for a few transient remarks on each.

Probability is so essential, so fundamental a principle in all poetry The first whatever, that, according to Aristotle (Ib. x. 28.) a poet had better essential at- choose things in themselves impossible, which, from the ig- tribute of norance or credulity of his readers or hearers, appear probable, the fable; than things which, though really existing, would from the same ig- the pro- norance appear incredible*. From this principle of probability, bable. we may easily deduce how far, and in what respect, the observation of the unities tends to the perfection of the fable. It is clear that a unity of action is necessary to every drama †; for it is not only out- of

long the drama was nothing more than the dythyrambic song of Bacchus, and a monologue, without connection, or design, in Greece, and what invincible difficulties the progress of the fable for ages met with among the elder poets, are well known. Æschylus was the first who broke through the barrier, and formed something of a regular fable, though his plots are little more than outlines, and if he was not more valuable for his characters and poetry, than his action, even his Persæ, the most regular of his tragedies, would not now be twice read. In point of design his plots seem to me but little, if any thing more advanced to maturity, than the *Ella*, and *Goodwin* published in the poems attributed (whether truly or falsely) to Rowley, which bear no small resemblance to Æschylus, as much in the sublimity of the sentiments, and images, as in the meagreness of the fable.

* Of the first kind, the effects attributed to witchcraft and magic during their influence over the world, may be brought as an instance; of the latter, many physical truths, as the freezing of water, or the appearance of the sun above the horizon for half a year together, to an inhabitant of the torrid zone the first time he heard of them: or, to the illiterate among ourselves, the declaration that the sun stands still, and the earth moves. In short, in poetry, as in religion, we must accommodate ourselves to the received opinions on common subjects, if we hope to engage attention.

† By unity of action is not meant an unity of person, as Aristotle says the authors of the *Thesæide*, *Heraclidae*, and other poems of that kind fancied (Ib. x. 6.) and as was the case with the writers of our old moralities; but one event, composed of several parts, of which every one reflects light and order on what goes before, and follows, where nothing is unconnected, detached, or independent, but all combine as parts of a whole. The parts of such dramas are as different from a tissue of detached and unconnected scenes, as the aliquot and aliquant parts of quantity, both are indeed

How far the
unity of ac-
tion is ne-
cessary to
Tragedy.

of all probability, that a variety of actions (which perhaps take up a great part of a man's life) can be represented together; but if they could, wanting a common bond or connection, they would produce no interest; and without interest, the very essence of Tragedy is gone. Of how much consequence Aristotle held the unity of design in a Tragedy, may be seen in the 8th chapter of his Poetics; and the first 45 verses of Horace's Art of Poetry are taken up in explaining, in recommending this unity, and giving examples of mistakes on the subject, the precepts for its preservation ending with this solemn decision: *Hoc amet, hoc spernet, promissi carminis auctor*. And, according to Hurd, in his note on the passage, not without reason; for he insists that the reduction of a subject into one entire, consistent plan, is the most difficult of all the offices of invention, and is more immediately addressed, in the high and sublime sense of it, to the poet. Nay, this unity of action is still more essential, as the Greek critic observes (Ib. x. 15) to the tragic than the epic poet; for Tragedy being of so little extent, its parts must be nicely proportion'd, and its episodes (if it have any) not only intimately allied to the main subject, but very short. An epic poem, by means of its length, can extend its episodes to such a degree, as shall give all their parts a full and just proportion; but if we follow this rule in Tragedy, instead of composing a body well proportioned in all its limbs, we shall form one which will not be of its just magnitude in any one member*. Whoever reads Riccoboni†, will find that all nations, in the infancy of their Theatre, have universally offended against this unity of design, which strongly proves, that the invention of the fable is not only the most important, but the most difficult part of the business of the tragic poet; for, as has been lately observed by a distinguished writer‡, "It is much easier to form dialogues than to contrive adventures. Every position makes way for an argument, and every objection dictates an answer. But, whether it be that we comprehend but few of the possibilities of life, or that life itself affords little variety, every man who has tried, knows how much labour it will cost to form such a combination of circumstances, as shall have at once the grace of novelty and credibility, and

parts, but while the first is bound and related to one whole by a common measure, the other can be referred to no whole at all. Of this latter kind were the Tragedies of Greece while they consisted of dythyrambic songs with episodes interposed, and every one knows the case to be the same with our old mysteries, which are little more than a group of independent actions heaped together in such a manner as to remind one of those scenes of enchantment, where poets have brought together all the productions of North and South, Winter and Summer, into one view, of which, though parts may be beautiful, the whole is monstrous.

* In short, a Tragedy, like a statue, should have all its parts nicely adapted and proportioned; it is not the finishing any particular one, but the correspondence of the whole, which gives it truth, probability, and interest.

Emilium circa ludum faber, unus et unguis
Exprimet, et mollis imitabitur ære capillos;
Infelix operis summa, quia ponere totum
Nesciet.

† Hist. de tous les Theatres de l'Europe.

‡ Johnson's prefaces to the English poets—Life of Butler.

"delight

"delight fancy without violence to reason." In a word, pieces composed of ill-connected, detached scenes, that have only juxtaposition, are as different from those which have a regular unity of design, as the chaos, with all the elements commixed together in wild confusion, from the same elements formed into a world full of design, order, harmony, and grandeur; where, though perhaps no one part may produce those astonishing appearances which arise from the sudden conflict and collision of discordant atoms, as the pencil of Milton has painted them, yet the effect of the whole is immeasurably greater, one being all light, order, and magnificence, the other all darkness, confusion, and rudeness*.

But if the unity of action is so essential to the perfection of the fable, are not those of time and place equally so? I answer, No; unity of time, and that interest which is the soul of Tragedy, but even lessens that probability for whose sake their observance is chiefly recommended. This Ricoboni justly observes is the case in the *Cinna* of Corneille, where the whole plot passing in the closet of Augustus, against whom the conspiracy is formed, the author is betray'd into greater improbabilities, by the discourses which the conspirators hold in a place where they ought not to open their mouths for fear of being discovered, than any little change of place, round the principal scene of action, would have occasioned†. Aristotle, who is so strict in the observance of the unity of action, is much less rigorous in regard to the other two. The unity of time he only confines within twenty-four hours; which indeed, in some measure, confines the place, as, in the revolution of the sun, it cannot be much changed. The unities of time and place should certainly be preserved as far as is consistent with probability and interest; and the good sense of Aristotle saw, that the confining the time to the extent of twenty-four hours, and consequently the place to the spots adjacent to the principal scene of action, was the

* I know it may, and expect it will be urged against what is here advanced that Shakespeare's historical plays are little more than a tissue of detached actions, and yet they never fail to charm every hearer. I own the objection just, but answer, that this want of unity of design is not less a defect even in Shakespeare, altho' the subject, so interesting to an English audience, joined to his art of moving the passions on the stage, and the beauties of his poetry in the closet, bear him triumphantly through it. Whenever a second Shakespeare arises he may be allowed, like the first, to spurn all rules (though his genius might soar to greater heights were he to observe them, as Shakespeare himself would doubtless have done had he lived in later times) but no poet of less resources should venture to imitate those defects which will infallibly counteract his own interest: for, as a celebrated French critic observes, Tous les incidents de l'intrigue doivent naître successivement l'un de l'autre, et c'est la continuité de la chaîne qui produit l'ordre, et l'unité. Les jeunes gens dans la fougue d'une imagination pleine de feu, négligent trop cette règle importante. Pourvu qu'ils excitent du tumulte sur la scène, et qu'ils forment des tableaux frappans, ils s'inquiètent peu des liaisons, des gradations, et des passages; c'est par-là cependant qu'un Poëte est le rival de la nature, et que la fiction est l'image de la vérité. Marmontel Poétique François. T. 1. p. 340.

† Ricobini dissertation sur la Tragedie moderne, à la fin de son. Hist. des Theatres. See also Marmontel Poétique François, T. 2. p. 207, &c.

limit calculated to produce the greatest beauties, with the least defects. I cannot therefore help dissenting in this point from a celebrated writer, when he reasons thus: If I can suppose the stage in the first scene one apartment, and in the second another, why may I not suppose one scene in England, and the next in France*? Because, though a small change of place adds to probability and interest, a greater change has a quite opposite effect; and this is not the only case in which the unlimited indulgence of any enjoyment destroys that very satisfaction which the moderate and chastised use of it never fails to heighten. In short, there must be a limit somewhere, whenever the defect occasioned by departing from strict propriety, is equal to the beauty proposed to be produced by it, it becomes null and useless; that licence, therefore, is preferable to all others, which produces, upon the whole, the greatest beauty with the least defect; and that, I believe, upon the maturest consideration, will be found to be included (in the present case) within the diurnal revolution of the sun, the period prescribed by Aristotle †.

The second attribute of the fable; the marvelous. But it is not enough that the plot be probable (for that it might be, however simple the action) unless it be also sufficiently implex, and various, to excite, and inflame, the spectators curiosity, unless, in short, it contain the marvellous, the second attribute of the fable. Aristotle defines the difference between a simple, and implex fable to be, that the first is a single consistent story, which proceeds with an even tenor from beginning to end, without either discovery or change of fortune; whereas the implex contains both.

* See Johnson's preface to his edition of Shakespeare.

† The want of unity of action, in the origin of Tragedy, was one reason which rendered it so easy to observe the unities of time and place. (Ricoboni Dissertat. ut supra). When the plot was inartificial, and the scenes detached, it was no difficult matter to represent them all in the same place, but when the fable was improved into one connected implex action, its contrasted situations, and opposite interests, could not be managed on the same spot, nor in the short time the spectator sat, without forfeiting probability, and losing far more essential beauties than it preserved. There were indeed two other reasons which contributed to fix the scene on the antient stage, one was the chorus, which was stationary from the beginning to the end of the piece; the other was the immense size of the antient theatres, and the form of them, with the vessels fixed in different parts of them, to reflect and increase the tone of the voice, both which rendered any change of scene extremely inconvenient, if not impossible (as may be seen in Vitruvius). The moderns therefore by lessening their theatres, and breaking the continuity of place, have acquired several advantages. They have changed the dead masks, and measured declamation, if not singing of the antients, for the varied living expressions of the human features, and the natural tones of the human voice. By altering the scene they have not only been able to introduce greater variety, and interest into their fable, but the change itself adds to the effect of the piece, whatever passion it be intended to inspire. We all know what a tincture the mind takes from the objects which surround it, the view therefore of a grand, a pleasing, or a melancholy scene, a palace, a garden, or a prison, will affect the heart with congenial sensations, and of course add to the power of the whole. The same may be said of dramatic music, when properly employed: the effect which music, and decoration, are calculated to produce in the drama is a copious as well as curious subject, and has never yet been treated with the extent, or precision, it deserves.

He

He gives the complete preference to the implex fable, for the following reasons: as terror and pity are the essence of Tragedy, it is not every action which is proper for its purpose, but those only which are adapted to produce those emotions, and the more adapted the more proper. Now terror and pity are much increased by surprise, or the marvellous, but the marvellous cannot exist without discovery, or change of fortune; therefore the implex fable is preferable to the simple. But he justly demands, that both discovery and change of fortune should arise either of necessity or probability, from the very arrangement of the fable; for it is very different, whether one naturally produces the other, or they only succeed each other without connection or dependence; and, according to him, they then make the greatest impression when they arise naturally and probably from the fable, produce each other, and both happen at the same time*.

In this artful contexture, this richness and variety of the fable, the English theatre has by degrees risen to great excellence. The origin of the stage, as we before observed, seems to have been much the same in all countries. The Persæ, and Gorboduc, were among the first Tragedies in Greece, and England, which could boast of any marks of regularity; and even these were little more than outlines of a finished design. Nor do I think the fable ever reached that perfection in Greece, in this respect, which it has done in England. We know what a length of time has passed between the age of Gorboduc, and the present; and who will assert, that among us, the fable has yet received all the perfection of which it is capable; why then must it necessarily be supposed to have attained the summit of excellence in Greece, during the short period which passed between Æschylus, and Euripides†. When we praise the refinement of Grecian taste and judgment, and give as a proof of it the simplicity of fable which reigns in their Tragedies, while we cannot be engaged but by bustle and intrigue, we perhaps impute that to refinement (I speak with reverence not only of the antients, but of the great names among the moderns, from whose opinions on this head I dissent) we, I say, impute that to refinement, which, not improbably, was owing to inexperience. 'Tis certain the mind

Implex fable preferable to the simple.

Improvement of the moderns in regard to the contexture of the fable.

The simplicity of the Grecian fable owing to inexperience.

* Discovery is a transition from ignorance to knowledge, between those whom the poet has destined to happiness or misery. Change of fortune is the actual alteration of the state of those so destined by the poet. Aristot. ib. x. 3. 1. & 12.

† Marmontel owns the Greek theatre was deficient in action, and gives for it a reason perfectly consonant to the idea that the artful contexture of the fable contributes greatly to its perfection. He says, it was because, in the formation of their fable, they attended chiefly to the denouement, and troubled themselves but little with the nœud, or combining the plot of the piece, which therefore was naked and barren, and of this he gives various examples, even where the action was most implex. Marmon. Poet. Fran. T. 2. p. 157. et seq. — But if this be a true representation of the antient stage, it may be asked how they filled up the void of five acts? and the answer will be, partly by means of the chorus, whose reflections took up great part of the play, and partly by interweaving with the dialogue political harangues, moral dogmas, and the description of religious, and political ceremonies, subjects, which, though agreeable to the Greeks, as being consonant to the manners of republics, would be totally out of nature on our theatre.

refts

Proved by
the example
of painting
and music.

Nature and
use of dou-
ble plots.

rests contented and pleased with lesser beauties, provided it has not been favoured with a view of greater; but this once acquired, it regards with indifference or contempt, what it before contemplated with rapture. This has been the fate of every art, and why must poetry plead an exemption? In painting those who were transported with the works of Cimabue its restorer, and his immediate successors, if they had seen the miraculous powers of Guido's or Raphael's pencil, would have found disgust take place of their former pleasure. In music also, those who have been used to the ornamented compositions of the present, would find little entertainment from works which were the delight of the fifteenth century. In dramatic music particularly, the admirers of the present Opera would not have patience to hear the simple strains which enchanted the same theatre not a hundred years backwards. The same effect has taken place in dramatic poetry; that want of design, that barrenness of action (and it is of the action alone I would be thought to speak, in sentiment and style the antients claim every excellence) with which the simplicity of our forefathers was fully gratified, raises in the breasts of their more refined, and fastidious progeny, no sensations but those of apathy or scorn*. Be the case however as it may upon the Grecian stage, so essential, at least to our theatre, is an artificial contexture of the fable, that a double plot (though by dividing the action it hurts its unity, and of course diminishes its interest) is as much to be preferred to a single one not sufficiently various, and implex, as this latter to the former, when it eminently possesses these properties. Episodes, we before observed, are less adapted to dramatic than epic poetry; yet, if the principal action be meagre and sterile, this is the poet's best resource, for any thing is preferable to the apathy produced by want of incident. But then the greatest care is required in the management of an under-plot; if it does not combine well with the principal action, or is of equal importance with it, the mind will be obliged perpetually to change its object, and as it cannot obey two different, or perhaps contrary emotions at once, the one must necessarily weaken and destroy the other. This is frequently the case, both on the French and English stage, with plays where double plots are employed; for the under-plot being generally a love story, and love being a passion which takes the most forcible hold of the human heart, these episodes frequently interest the spectator as much as the principal action; and this must ever be the case, when a tragic poet suffers himself to be so far mistaken in his subject, as to imagine that one or two interesting situations will make

* But this by no means takes from the genius, and abilities, of the old writers, who would perhaps in the very points in which their successors surpass them, have attained superiority of excellence, had they been favoured with the same means of improvement. I only contend for the fact, without the smallest idea of depreciating the antients, whose abilities not only in the polite arts, but also in the sciences, were, I believe, at least equal to the moderns; yet, though I see no reason for suspecting Aristotle's genius to have been a whit less than Newton's, we all know, from the different age in which he lived, the different effects of it in philosophical discoveries, and I am apt to think the same position may be maintained in respect of the polite arts, though not in the same degree.

amends for the general sterility of the fable; and so, like a miner misled by the appearance of a small vein of rich ore, works upon an ungrateful soil, which will never repay his labours *.

We see then how necessary the artful contexture of the fable is to its success: but though it unite both the probable and the marvelous, it will not yet have attained its true excellence unless it possess also the pathetic, the third attribute of the fable, and the most essential of all; for it may exist to a certain degree without the others, but without this the others will have no efficacy. The subjects which Aristotle recommends as the most proper for Tragedy, are the strongest proofs of the justice of this observation. All actions, he says, must pass between friends, or enemies, or those who are indifferent to each other. Of these the first only are proper for Tragedy, as alone producing terror and pity in an eminent degree; for whatever distresses happen between enemies, or indifferent persons, they excite no sensations, except what arise from the mere event; but when the same distresses happen between persons strongly interested in each others fate, 'tis then all the emotions which produce terror and pity have full exertion. To such subjects as these, therefore, he recommends the tragic poet principally to have recourse †.

The great and universal source by which both the ancient and the modern stage supports and increases the pathos of the fable, is either discovery or change of fortune, or both united. The ancients, indeed, had very little idea of either during the progress of the piece, reserving their whole force for the catastrophe; but the moderns attending to the *nœud*, as well as the *dénouement*, Discovery and change of fortune

* Ricoboni has shewn several instances of this conduct on the French stage; one of which is the *Andromache* of Racine, where the under-plot of Orestes, and *Hermione*, is full as principal as that of *Andromache*, and *Pyrrius*. It must not be dissembled that Arnaud among the French, and Hurd among ourselves, speak strongly in favor of a simplicity of fable; but if the latter critic means only to condemn a plot which, if single, is so implex as not to be intelligible, or, if double, has its parts unconnected (as his quotation from Ricoboni hints at) I perfectly agree with him; but if he means to prefer the thinness of the ancient fables, to the richness and variety of the modern, I cannot help thinking he rejects the great source of interest which modern Tragedy boasts over the ancient. In the art of combining events, and preparing situations, in a word, of giving to the action all the probability, variety, and interest of which it is capable, the English theatre excels all others ancient or modern. (See Hurd's *Dissert.* on the provinces of the drama, ch. i. p. 177.)—If indeed, a fable, simple in itself, could, without the help of declamation, chorus, or any adventitious assistance, be supported with such increasing pathos, from the beginning to the end, as should continually employ, and interest the spectator, this I allow would be the first tragic excellence, and this is the kind of excellence which Arnaud contends for (*Discours second préliminaire au Compte de Comminges*, p. 15. et seq.) but his own example in the drama of Comminges which follows, proves, according to my apprehension, that this dignity of simplicity in Tragedy, like Bacon's *prima Philosophia* in science, is not attainable by mortals.

† *Ib.* x. 18.

‡ Thus in the *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles, which is cited by Aristotle as the *chef-d'œuvre* of antiquity, the *nœud* of the piece is all before the commencement of it—the whole Tragedy being but one long *dénouement*.

duce effects proportionably greater; for the chief art of conducting the plot is not to have the distress all heaped up at once, but to be unfolded and heightened by insensible gradations, proceeding from various incidents which arise naturally out of each other. These should be so contrived as to make the spectator imagine the catastrophe continually impending, by those very events which, though they seem of necessity to bring it on, are the very means of deferring it, entangling, instead of developing the fable; and, while they insensibly augment the distress, point to the denouement, like rays converging to a focus, where their concentrated force produces that revolution, which casts the persons concerned from hope to despair, or raises them from threatened ruin to security and happiness*.

Rules for
the conduct
of the de-
nouement.

There are many ways by which the interest of the denouement may be increased; and Aristotle lays down several rules for its conduct. According to him, the best possible catastrophe is that where discovery and change of fortune are united; where the change of fortune is extreme, and follows instantly upon the discovery; which discovery must be made immediately before, or after, the commission of some act which decides the fate of the Dramatis Personæ (according as the catastrophe is happy or unhappy) and the more decided the revolution, the more extreme the change, from one condition to the other, which is superinduced by it, the more interesting is the denouement.

Whether a
happy or
unhappy ca-
tastrophe is
most adapt-
ed to Tra-
gedy.

Whether a happy or unhappy catastrophe is most adapted to Tragedy, has been much disputed. Aristotle decides for the unhappy, provided this unhappiness is not the effect of inbred wickedness, but of some act into which a character, naturally good, has been hurried by passion. Hence Euripides, he says, is the most tragic of all the Poets, because his pieces generally have an unhappy catastrophe. But the greater part of the spectators (he goes on) not having strength of mind to support this kind of catastrophe, which affects their feelings too strongly, the poets, in accommodation to their weakness, have invented another kind of fable, happy for the virtuous, and unhappy for the vicious; but this is by no means so tragic as the other†.

But

* Quintilian was well acquainted with the necessity of making the interest of the action greatest at the denouement. *Tunc est commovendum theatrum cum ventum ad ipsum illud, quo veteres comediae, tragediaeque clauduntur, plaudite.* Lib. vi. cap. 1.

† Ib. x. 17. Yet notwithstanding his decision, this latter species of fable has been strenuously defended by a celebrated French critic. *Le poëte qui se ménage un dénouement heureux pour les bons, et malheureux pour les méchants, a l'avantage de pouvoir peindre l'innocence avec tous ses charmes, la vertu dans tous son éclat, le crime avec toute son audace. Plus la scélératesse de l'entreprise, plus l'atrocité du complot révoltent, plus la révolution qui va les confondre transportera les spectateurs. Tant que le crime n'est point achevé, l'indignation reste suspendue, et l'espérance la contient: ce n'est que par l'iniquité de l'événement que l'indignation se décide, et c'est ce qu'on doit éviter. Qu'on m'agite aussi cruellement qu'il est possible jusqu'à la catastrophe; qu'on me fasse voir la vertu dans l'opprobre, dans les douleurs, au bord même du précipice; qu'on me fasse voir, comme Apelles, la Calomnie traînant l'innocence par les cheveux au tribunal de la justice; mais, lors que le voile de l'illusion tombera, que je puisse dire en rentrant en moi-même, c'est*

But whether the catastrophe be happy or unhappy, it ought always to be concealed from the persons concerned; for to make the fate of any character interesting, that fate, whatever it is to be, must be hid from him on whom it is intended to fall. If the catastrophe is happy, it must also be no less carefully concealed from the spectator than from the actor; for a person in peril ceases to excite either pity or terror in any great degree, as soon as his deliverance is foreseen. The denouement, when happy, ought therefore, for the audience, to be only within the circle of possibility, and the means of producing it should be only darkly suggested. When the catastrophe is unhappy, the case is quite altered in respect to the spectator; his foreseeing it then only augments his interest. This is another singular advantage which attends this kind of denouement; for a spectator, after having seen such a piece twenty times, comes with undiminished curiosity, because, as the event was not concealed from him at the first representation, he has lost nothing by having seen it; whereas a happy catastrophe being obliged to be concealed till the moment it arrives, the spectator, at a second representation, must lose part of his pleasure, as he cannot but know, that, whatever be the distress of the Dramatis Personæ, the issue is to be fortunate. Nay farther, an unhappy catastrophe, since its being known does not diminish its interest, may be inevitable; but a happy catastrophe, as it must be concealed, can be only probable. For the same reason also, an unhappy catastrophe may be very much extended without languishing*: but a happy catastrophe must

c'est ainsi que le ciel confond tôt ou tard le coupable, et qu'il protège l'innocent. Quelque violente que soit l'impression de douleur que me fait le dénouement, elle est bien-tôt effacée; mais ce qui ne s'efface pas de même, c'est la réflexion que j'emporte avec moi. Qu'elle soit donc à l'avantage de l'innocence, et de la vertu, et qu'en me retraçant ce que je viens de voir, elle me rappelle un Dieu juste. Marmontel. Poet. Fran. T. 2. p. 197, 198. The argument concerning the justice of God might be answered upon principles of morality, but not to insist on these in a work of criticism, it may be replied to all that is urged here, that an unhappy catastrophe, not only holds up a truer mirror of life (the great duty of the drama) but has the additional advantage of exciting terror, and pity, in a superior degree. Arnaud, all whose pieces end with unhappy catastrophes, strongly contends that the *sombre* in Tragedy is infinitely the most pathetic and theatrical. (Discours préliminaires au Comte de Comminges, p. 7, et 19 et seq.) And the author of the foregoing Tragedy owns himself so much of the same opinion, as to have acted against his own conviction when he made the catastrophe of it happy; for to have given the piece an unhappy one, by making Zoraida stab herself, and Zirvad afterwards discover she was Selim's sister, would have cost him very little trouble: but he thought the audience of the present times, like the Athenians of old, would have been apt to have called it unnecessary barbarity; and he has little doubt but that, although the Tragedy has been now criticised for having no blood spilt upon the stage, it would then have been blamed as being wantonly cruel and bloody; so easy is it to censure, whatever be the means a writer employs.

* Thus the last act of the Orphan, and Fair Penitent, is little more than an extended catastrophe—nay, as we before observed, the whole of the Oedipus Tyrannus is one long dénouement, but Oedipus being to convict himself of parricide, and incest, every new light which is thrown upon the subject does but redouble the spectator's emotion, and the more he knows the more he is interested. We are not less affected in the Orphan, and Fair

must be short: if it is unfolded by degrees it flags, because terror and pity cease the moment we foresee the safety of a person in distress; one or two scenes are all, therefore, which a happy catastrophe will admit of. The revolution ought not to be guessed at till the moment it arrives; and to be successful must be so managed, that its suddenness shall not hurt its probability when it does arrive, nor its probability, when it has arrived, lessen its uncertainty before its arrival.

Recapitulation of the properties and management, of the fable.

Upon the whole, the fable, to produce its due and genuine effect, should be so constructed as to preserve the unity of action, nor should the unities of time and place be farther departed from, than the preservation of more essential beauties will warrant. It should be single, and sufficiently implex to keep attention fully alive, and pathetic enough to raise the affections to their greatest energy. The interest should increase by insensible gradations, till it gains its highest climax at the denouement, which, to be perfect, should contain both discovery and change of fortune; the latter to be extreme, and follow immediately on the former. If the catastrophe is intended to be unhappy, it will not lose in pathos by being guessed at by the audience; but if the contrary is the case, must be carefully concealed from them till the last moment. In other words, the fable should unite the probable, the marvellous, and the pathetic, for then and then only will it produce its full influence in representation *. On a fable, therefore, so contrived, and conducted, a tragic poet must place his chief assurance of success on the stage. In the closet, it is by another criterion he must be judged; if he hopes to survive there, he must direct his principal attention to the preservation of character, sentiment, and diction, on which a Tragedy, when deprived of the éclat of representation, must chiefly depend for support; and on which, therefore, we shall now proceed to offer a few cursory remarks.

Though the construction and management of the fable is the great source of success on the stage, yet in the closet, character, sentiment, and diction should be the poet's first great object.

Penitent, because we see by the situation of Monimia, and Calista, that the catastrophe must be unhappy, and our knowledge that Romeo has swallowed the poison when Juliet awakes, adds infinitely to the pathos of the piece.

* By these ideas was the fable of Zoraida formed. Conscious of the importance of the action, considered with a view to representation, the author's aim was to choose a story which should unite its three essential properties, the probable, the marvellous, and the pathetic. To give these their full effect he proposed to himself to make his plot at once single, and implex, to preserve strictly the unity of action, and be within the revolution of the sun in regard to the other two; to endeavour to augment the interest of the piece by insensible gradations, till it should arrive at its height in the denouement, which he intended to contain both discovery, and change of fortune; the latter to be extreme, and follow immediately upon the former †. Both of these it was his design, as the catastrophe was intended to be happy, to conceal till the last moment, and at the instant when his principal characters (freed from their mutual deception, and reduced, by an event which fills them with short-lived joy, to greater extremity of distress) seem lost beyond redemption, by a denouement, probable, as being prepared from the beginning of the play, yet unexpected to rescue them from their state of despair, and restore them to happiness.—How far he has been able to execute his own ideas, he is not able, and if he was, it would not become him to pretend to judge.

† Castelvetro specifies five different ways in which this discovery, an change of fortune, may be effected, and gives examples of each. Spolition della Poet. d'Aristotle, p. 136. et seq.

And first, of Character and Manners. By Manners, I understand those qualities, inclinations, and affections of the soul, by which the distinguishing character of each man is determined. It is these inherent, and peculiar qualities, which discriminate each individual from his neighbour, though even these frequently receive a new, and accidental form, from some sudden, irresistible passion, which for a time alters, and disguises, the natural disposition *.

Of Character, thus defined, there was but little upon the antient stage; the plain reason of which is, that Destiny, and the will of the gods, as explained by oracles, were the great moving principle on the theatres of Greece. The terror, and pity, of their drama were generally produced by a succession of events, in which the sufferer, the sport of destiny, was guilty of no offence, and exhibited little or no virtue, except obedience to the will of the gods, and, consequently, could show little decided character, virtuous or vicious †.

On the theatre of the moderns the case is widely different; with Manners us, the various passions of the soul, love, jealousy, ambition, pride, have taken place of oracles, and destiny. Man is deemed, from the tenor of his conduct, the cause of his own happiness or misery, which affords room for far greater display of manners, and spreads over the scene a thousand new situations unknown to the antients. Character, and Manners, therefore, however, from the peculiar opinions of the pagan world concerning Providence, they might be dispensed with on the antient stage, become necessary on ours to the perfection of any piece ‡; but the greatest care must be taken to keep them in due subordination; for both on the antient and modern theatre, the action, as being in nature the primary object, must be the prominent feature of Tragedy, where it answers to the principal figure in a picture, while Character, and Manners, may be aptly compared to the attendant groups. If these are heterogeneous to the main design, or if just and pertinent, are brought too forward, and set in too strong a light, by eclipsing the principal figure, they at least diminish, if they do not destroy, the effect of the whole §. That this has been the case on the French theatre, its warmest admirers, I think, cannot deny; and the steps by which they

* Εἰ δὲ ἦθος μὲν τὸ τοῦτον, ὃ δηλοῖ τὴν προαίρεσιν ὁποῖά τις ἐστίν, ἐν οἷς ἂν ἐστὶ δόλον, ἢ προαίρεται, ἢ φεύγει ὃ λέγων. διότερ ἂν ἐχουσιν ἦθος ἐνίοι τῶν λόγων.

Aristot. Ib. κ. ς'.

† Thus Oedipus is branded with no crime, he is unhappy, but not guilty; neither are Iphigenia, or Agamemnon more to blame, they are not reduced to distress in consequence of having fallen victims to their own passions, but from pure obedience to the will of the gods.

‡ Hora, quantunque i Costumi sieno parte dipendente et accessoria della favola, come è stato detto, non dimeno è di tanto vigore che da loro dinominiamo una delle quattro specie della Tragedia, cio è quella che ἡθικὴ s'appella.

Poet. d'Aristot. sposta per Castelvetro, p. 178.

§ The honor of the invention of this new species of Tragedy, of which manners are the essential, and leading feature, is undoubtedly due to Corneille; he was the father of it, and the succeeding poets of his nation have till very lately trod in his steps without deviation. But at present this species of Tragedy seems declining among them, and the pathos of action begins to occupy much more of their attention. Voltaire led the way, and Arnaud

Manners
the principal
feature
of the
French tra-
gic drama,
and the rea-
son of it.

they were led to it, seem not difficult to trace. Corneille saw clearly that, since the principle of action on the modern theatre was widely different from the antient, Manners were much more essential to the former, than the latter; but, adhering rigidly to the antient continuity of scene, and of course reduced to the necessity of an inartificial plot, without their resources to support it, he was led to make Manners the principal, instead of the secondary feature of his drama; and the more so, as it afforded ample scope for the display of those studied and contrasted sentiments to which his genius was so peculiarly turned. Hence he composed Tragedies where the doctrine of Aristotle is reversed, and the Manners, instead of being subservient to the fable, have usurped the principal place, while the action frequently either stands still, or proceeds so slowly, that, like the hand of the dial, it seems not to advance. The great and essential fault of this kind of drama is, that it excites admiration, rather than pity or terror. Its pathos consists not in the representation of some affecting story, but in the combat of desire with duty, or desire with desire; a struggle between love and honour, which, as the hero or heroine is generally made victorious over his or her inclinations, we may indeed regard with wonder, but seldom with pity, for this can have little place in a contest, where the pleasure and pride of victory set the object above compassion. That interior pathos, then, of the fable, in the invention of which Marmontel so much glories, as the triumph of the French over the Grecian theatre*, is the pathos of manners, not of action, which, though it give the poet great room to display his talents in various beauties of eloquence, is so far from promoting the warmth, and interest of the action, that it hangs like a dead weight upon it, and is indeed the secret reason why many plays, which are beautiful poems in the closet, never fail to languish on the stage. On the contrary, the English theatre, proceeding on the antient idea that the fable is the principal excellence of Tragedy, has endeavoured, by every possible means, to increase its variety and pathos; but at the same time neglecting the different principle of action on the antient and modern stage, has paid too little attention to manners, and by that means has frequently produced pieces which, though they seize the affections strongly in representation, give but little pleasure in the closet†. In a word, though manners are undoubtedly essential to the perfection

has not only pursued it much farther in his *Comminges*, *Fayal*, *Merival*, &c. but has ventured, in opposition to the general taste of his countrymen, to defend it.

* Marmontel, *Poet. Franc.* T. 2. chap. 12.

† This diversity of taste in dramatic writing between the French, and English, takes its rise from the different genius of the two nations; for the drama always partakes of the character of the people. The Spaniards are famed for romantic notions of honour, and fondness for intrigue; and these are the leading features of their drama. A studied refinement, and polish of manners, bordering on affectation, sentimental gallantry, and what they call *la metaphysique de l'amour*, are the characteristic both of the French and of their theatre; while the English, accustomed to think for themselves, from that liberty which is their birthright and glory, acquire in vigour what they lose in refinement; wont to act, more than talk, they cannot bear a long display, and combat of studied sentiment; their bold and adventurous minds delight to push forward into the chain of events; used to business and employ.

perfection of Tragedy, yet, to give them their due effect; they should be kept in subordination to the fable, and occupy only the second place.

Probability, and unity, however essential they may be in the construction of the plot, are still more so in the formation of character. and unity. Some deviation from truth is allowable, nay absolutely necessary in equally essential to the fable; for when we come to the theatre, knowing we must, of course, suppose the scene some place which it is not, we willingly submit to the deceit; but being in full expectation of seeing characters justly painted, if the representation is faulty in this respect, the illusion into which we had voluntarily persuaded ourselves vanishes. I am prepared to fancy the theatre Athens, Rome, or Constantinople; but this once supposed, if you make a Greek, Roman, or Turk talk like an Englishman, the falsity of the whole returns doubly upon me, and, unless the story is in itself so affecting as to get the better of this incoherence, all interest is at an end. A still more cogent reason is, that a nice painting of character being an excellence peculiarly adapted to give pleasure in the closet, any default in this respect will be there soonest detected.

As all kinds of character are confessedly not equally adapted to Tragedy, this principle of probability and unity is the poet's surest guide to direct him in his choice.

First, then, all allegorical personages, such as the personification of the passions, the vices, and virtues (though admitted into epic poetry) are totally unfit for Tragedy, as being wholly destitute of probability. In the infancy of the drama in all nations, while it leans on epic poetry, ere it has gained strength to go alone, they are generally employed; but wherever Tragedy has acquired any form, or maturity, they have been justly exploded. The reason of this is evident; for in epic poetry they scarce ever sustain the part of real characters, but are only introduced by the poet for the sake of animating his narrative* (which is one great advantage of narration) but in the drama, where the poet totally disappears, if introduced at all, they must be introduced as real characters; and indeed such they were to all intents and purposes when they were used; force and strength being as much real characters in Æschylus, as Prometheus himself, and the same may be affirmed of the personification of the passions in our old moralities, but the absurdity of this conduct cannot fail to strike and disgust every intelligent spectator. Nay, so late as Euripides, the last of the three great tragic poets of Greece, we find allegorical characters were not totally banished the stage, he himself having introduced death in his *Alcestis*, which is an additional proof to how little maturity the fable ever arrived in Greece.

employment themselves, they love to dwell on the pathos of action, rather than eloquence; and uniting strength and sensibility of mind, choose to contemplate that distress which powerfully occupies both; and these are the striking and discriminating peculiarities of their drama. In short, in all nations the arts and manners of a people are the mirrors of each other, and faithfully reflect their mutual features, as might be, I think, shewn by a deduction (in our own country for instance) from the revival of letters to the present age, would not the discussion take us up too much time at present.

* The *Henriade* of Voltaire may be justly censured as faulty in this respect, for the allegorical characters of Discord, Fanaticism, &c. act the part of real characters in that poem, as truly as any of the human personages.

adly,

Supernatural characters, if introduced into Tragedy, require the most delicate management.

adly, All supernatural characters, if introduced into Tragedy, to which they are not naturally adapted, require the most delicate management, not only because it is extremely difficult to preserve in them either probability or unity, having no archetype to guide us; but because to support them in action (however it may be in narrative) with that dignity which they demand, while the dread of their influence pervades the mind; or to preserve them from the ridicule which inevitably attends them, the moment that influence ceases to be believed, requires still greater exertion. The marvellous in nature is not difficult for a true genius to describe, because he has a model with which to compare it, and so can comprehend it, as being nothing but the amplification of what he sees and understands*. But the marvellous in mind is very different; here we have no standard to refer to, the expansion of our own ideas, or modes of thinking or acting, will give us but little conception how superior beings think and act, which yet is all the means of knowledge we have on this head; hence the impossibility of describing either the mode of existence, or the operation not only of the Deity, but of angels; even Milton's genius failed him here. His battle of the angels, though painted with wonderful sublimity, is only the mode of acting of human beings enlarged, and this objection will lie much stronger when the deity is brought into action†. This indeed may seem to conclude against the use of all supernatural agents, as well in epic poetry as Tragedy; but we should remember, that the far greater part of these agents (as witches, ghosts, fairies, demons, &c.) are the creatures of our own fancy, and as such may be adequately described by epic poetry; nay, even in those to whose full description it is inadequate, it may yet achieve a great deal, while Tragedy can do little or nothing in either; because in the former much passes in narration, in the latter, every thing is transacted under the eye of the spectator. Now, what often appears very beautiful and sublime in narration, becomes ridiculous in representation, even upon canvass (though there much more may be done than it is possible to effect on the stage, as the picture of the witches meeting Macbeth evidently shews). As long as fancy is left to form its own image of supernatural beings from the poet's description, every thing succeeds; but when we bring them into action, having no means adequate to the conceptions with which the poet has furnished us, what is terrible or beautiful in narration, becomes ridiculous in representation; and this will be more particularly the case, whenever the agency of such beings ceases to be believed; it is then al-

* Thus having an idea of a horse, and his speed, it is but increasing it, and we have an idea of the leap of Neptune's horses, as Homer's imagination conceived it; so by extending the idea of a man to a giant we have an idea of Polypheme, and can understand his tearing up a rock, or walking with a tree for a staff. See Marmontel, Poet. Franc. T. 1. p. 409.

† Hence it has been frequently said, and lately well proved by Dr. Johnson, that systems of religion founded upon false mythology, where the deities are clothed in human passions, are more proper for poetry than the true; for, as he justly observes, whatever is great, desirable, or tremendous, is comprised in the name of the Supreme Being. Omnipotence cannot be exalted; infinity cannot be amplified; perfection cannot be improved. Prefaces to the English Poets. — Life of Waller.

most impossible, however they may hold their place in description, to separate ridicule from their appearance on the stage*.

But, were the representation of supernatural characters as easy as Human characters only adapted to the drama, it is difficult, they should not be introduced without pressing necessity,

Nec Deus interfit nisi dignus vindice nodus,

for Tragedy (at least among the moderns) being the theatre of the human passions, none but human personages have naturally entrance there, nor of these is every character equally adapted to its institution; for,

3dly. All completely virtuous or vicious characters are unfit to occupy the principal interest of Tragedy, not indeed on account of failure in point of probability or unity, but because they do not answer the great end of Tragedy. The miseries of the one excite only horror, the villainies of the other only detestation, neither of which produce the genuine emotions which Tragedy is intended to raise; for detestation produces neither terror, or pity, and horror is always attended by indignation, and disgust. Indeed we are never truly interested by the fate of those who are not in a great measure similar to ourselves. All the passions have their ultimate foundation in self-love; that pity or terror which the misfortunes of our neighbour excite in us, is at bottom founded in the internal consciousness that we may fall into the same distress ourselves; but where the characters are of such a nature either for virtue, or vice, as to bear little relation to our own, we may indeed feel admiration, horror, indignation, disgust at their conduct, but seldom pity or terror, these are emotions raised only by the consequence of those actions to which we find ourselves from the force of passion equally liable.

The exhibition of absolutely virtuous characters may however be defended on the principle that their sufferings bid us look to another life, and their manner of bearing them teaches us fortitude, but, in regard to absolutely vicious characters, nothing of this kind can be offered; for, as every man justly thinks too well of himself to suppose he can ever become similar to such a being, so, whether he triumph over virtue, or fall the victim of his own crimes, his actions equally excite detestation and abhorrence; we feel neither compassion for him, nor terror for ourselves.

But there are yet farther reasons why a perfectly vicious character should never be made the principal one in a Tragedy. Vice is a habitude, crime is an accident. A man may be criminal in a particular case, and yet be in general worthy; the same cannot be said of the vicious; for this reason we often separate the person from the crime, never from the vice. Now as all habitudes are acquired by slow degrees, it requires a long time either to contract, or correct them: they cannot therefore, during the short space allotted

* I believe it will be generally allowed, that all the powers of Shakespeare cannot now preserve the witches in Macbeth, from the ridicule which attends them. The magic in Medea adds very little to the pathos of the piece; and if the ghost in Hamlet, and those in Richard still have a tragic effect, it is because the superstition concerning the appearance of spirits is not yet thoroughly eradicated. I regard the Midsummer Night's Dream as the jeu d'esprit of a first rate genius, and the Tempest, like the Prometheus of Æschylus, as a beautiful opera.

Mixed characters the great instruments to produce the true effect of Tragedy.

to the action of the stage, be with propriety either contracted, or corrected. The spectator then, seeing neither the beginning, nor end of the habitude of vice, looks upon it as nature, and of course it must excite his detestation *. But an innocent, and virtuous man in general, may, by the influence of a strong, overpowering passion, become criminal in a moment; the spectator sees both cause, and effect, for the crime which is occasioned by a sudden effervescence of passion, is often followed by as sudden remorse, an instant sufficing to pass from innocence to guilt, from guilt to penitence. In this rapidity of various emotions consists the beauty, the glow, the pathos of the action; this it is which raises pity and terror to their utmost energy, and renders mixed characters the great instruments of Tragedy, by uniting most efficaciously its two great ends, the pleasure, which arises from pity, and the prudence, which arises from terror.

But, whatever be the characters which the poet aims at drawing, there are certain rules, the observation of which can by no means be dispensed with; if he hopes to succeed in his portrait. Of these Aristotle lays down four, under one or either of which, all that is necessary to be observed upon this head may be comprized †.

Aristotle's first rule for the conduct of the manners.

His first rule for the conduct of the manners is that they must be good (*χρηστα*). If he mean dramatic goodness here (as some contend) he then only directs that characters should be strongly marked and discriminated, naturally expressed, and well sustained; but as this seems merely an anticipation of his second rule, I cannot but think he means moral goodness; and then the rule only confirms what we have just been insisting upon, that vicious characters should never usurp the first place in a Tragedy, which should always be occupied by characters naturally good, but hurried into crimes by the excess of noble passions. Othello is a perfect example of this kind of mixed character, on the exhibition of which the tragic poet should place his chief attention.

Second rule for the conduct of the manners.

The second rule laid down by the same critic for the manners, is that they should be *κα ἀγαθότητα*, that is, to every character should be attributed whatever qualities are adapted to it, according to its

* And yet even characters of this kind may be attempted with success, as the Mahomet of Voltaire, and the Richard of Shakespeare shew. However, to make a vicious character at all succeed as the first personage, it is absolutely necessary, that by some means or other he should excite admiration, as Richard does by his daring spirit, and ambition, and Mahomet by the dignity of his character as a prophet; yet still I believe, without the interest occasioned by Zaphna, and Palmira, Mahomet would not be endured. Had Iago been the chief character in Othello, not Shakespeare's powers could have made it supportable. But though a vicious character is improper as the principal personage, it is perfectly in place as the second; for the machinations of the wicked are but too often the occasion of the miseries which happen to the virtuous, either by the crimes which they themselves (the wicked) commit, or those, which, by working upon the noblest tempers, they are the cause of in good men, of which Iago, who drives the generous unsuspecting Othello to murder his innocent wife, is a striking example, and perfectly consonant to nature, propriety, and the true end of Tragedy. The Abbé du Bos has treated this matter with great precision in the first volume of his *Reflexions critiques sur la poésie, et peinture*.

† Ib. n. 16.

age, sex, rank, and condition, whether of those which essentially belong to it in a state of nature, or are superinduced by a state of society, Horace has excellently expressed it in the following lines,

*Ætatis cujusque notandi sunt tibi mores,
Mobilibusque decor naturis dandus, et annis.*

of which he gives several examples; 1st, in the "Puer---reddere qui voces jam scit;" next in the "imberbis juvenis,"---who---"gaudet equis canibusque;" 3dly, in the "ætas animusque virilis,"---which "quærit opes, et amicitias, inservit honori;" and lastly, in the old man,---"Dilator, spe lentus, iners, pavidusque futuri." The foregoing lines relate to man whether in a state of nature or society, the following principally to a state of society.

*Qui didicit patriæ quid debeat, et quid amicis,
Quo sit amare parens, quo frater amandus, et hospes,
Quod sit conscripti, quod judicis officium; quæ
Partes in bellum missi ducis, ille profecto
Reddere personæ scit convenientia cuique.*

But this is not yet all that is intended by this rule, for

*Interit multum Divusne loquatur, an Heros,
Maturusne senex, an adhuc florente juventa
Fervidus, et matrona potens, an sedula nutrix *.*

In these times this latter part of the precept, which regards the management of under characters, is not the least difficult, or perplexing to the dramatic poet. In more early ages, while the language, and the audience were equally unpolished, and unrefined, the task was not very difficult; but now, when all uncultivated language on the stage, as well as in the closet (at least certainly in the latter) would be rejected with disdain, as favouring more of Comedy than Tragedy; to make the style so simple as to be natural for such characters (the sentiments being at the same time obliged to be more common, and trite) and yet avoid vulgarity, is a medium much easier to describe, than to execute †.

Aristotle's

* Vida also has comprized the whole rule in the following verses :

*Hinc varios moresque hominum, moresque animantum,
Aut studia imparibus divisa ætätibus, apta
Effingunt facie verborum, et imagine reddunt,
Quæ tardosque senes deceant, juvenesque virentes
Fœmineumque genus; quantum quoque rura colenti,
Aut famulo, distet regum alto è sanguine cretus.
Nam mihi non placeat, teneros si sit gravis annos
Telemachus supra; senior si Nestor inani
Gaudeat et ludo, et canibus, pictisque pharetris.
Et quoniam in nostro multi persæpe loquuntur
Carmine, verba illis pro conditione virorum,
Aut rerum damus, et proprii tribuntur honores
Cuiusque suus, seu mas, seu femina, sive Deus sit.*

Vidæ Poet. lib. ii. v. 460.

† The best resource the poet has now left to guard against this difficulty is, to place none of his characters in a situation so low, as not to be able with propriety to use cultivated language. Of this precept the author of the foregoing piece owns he availed himself, though he knows it is attended with one defect,

Third rule for the conduct of the manners. Aristotle's third rule is, that the manners should be similar (*τὸ ὅμοιον*) by which I understand, that they must not only be consonant to the fixed, and definite qualities, which nature has given to such and such characters, but also adapted to those which arise from prejudice, education, or local customs of climate, religion, &c. that is, they must be similar to the ideas the world has allotted to them; or, in other words, known characters whether individual, or national, must not be falsified. Horace expresses the rule thus in respect to individuals:

Honoratum si forte reponis Achillem,
Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer,
Jura neget sibi nata, nihil non arroget armis.
Sit Medea ferox, invictaque, flebilis Ixo,
Perfidus Ixion, Iō vaga, tristis Orestes.

Nor are the known characters of nations to be less carefully preserved than those of individuals; for not only

Intererit multum, divusne loquatur, an heros,
but also,

Colchus, an Assyrius, Thebis nutritus, an Argis.

If a Roman, or Greek, is represented with the manners of a Frenchman, or an Englishman, character is as much falsified, as if an old man should be drawn with the disposition, and pursuits, of a young one. This third rule, therefore, is full as necessary to the dramatic poet, who aspires to be a just painter of life and manners, as the former, and not a whit less difficult to observe; as the numbers who have failed in it, both on the French and English theatre, sufficiently evince*. In the fixed relations of mankind, what is nature to one nation; will in general be so to another (at least among civilized nations) a little variation in degree, not in kind, making all their difference. But the local manners which depend upon climate, religion, and education, as mythological and political ceremonies, are so totally different in different nations, that what is natural to one, is frequently the direct opposite to another†. Add too, that we cannot determine of their propriety, or impropriety, by consulting our own hearts and experience, as in the more fixed and universal relations of mankind; living with the people, or consulting those who have lived with them, being the only means of attaining any knowledge on the subject. This is one great source of the difficulties which arise in painting foreign local manners; but there is yet a greater, and that is, the divesting ourselves of all the peculiarities attendant on our own climate and education, and adopting those with which we are not familiar; the difficulty of which we all know, for

Necessity,
and difficulty of observing the
Costumi,

defect, as it certainly lessens that variety which is a great source of pleasure upon the stage.

* We all know how Dryden has been criticised for making an Emperor of Morocco talk of the gods of Rome, as familiarly as if they were his native deities.

† See this proved of the Greeks and Romans, the eastern, and western world, and the north of Europe, by Jones the eminent Orientalist of Oxford, in his Asiatic Poetry, Essay I.

Naturam

Naturam expellas furca tamen usque recurret.

Yet this the Dramatic Writer, whose scene is not laid at home, must do, if he means to avoid drawing a heterogeneous picture, a monster which has no existence. Indeed, if the customs of those Dilemma to concerning whom he writes are not obvious to the bulk of his own which the nation, they may throw a momentary obscurity over his piece upon observance the stage, and subject him to the ridicule of the ignorant, who, of the Cos- tumi re- making their own comprehensions the standard of all excellence, are ever ready to abuse, and ridicule, what they do not understand. But duces a writer. when we consider that it is for the closet chiefly that these beauties are calculated, this consideration is not to be weighed against the lasting disgrace, which the falsifying national manners would there inevitably draw upon him. The spectators ought, indeed, to do the poet justice, to go along with him, transport themselves in idea to the scene of action, and, for the time, become one people with the Dramatis personæ, be Greeks at Athens, Persians at Susa, and Turks at Constantinople. But this it is in vain to hope for from the unenlightened bulk of an audience; and if a Dramatic Writer expects it, as he has a right to do, from the majority of those, who, styling themselves Critics, assume the privilege of Judges, he will too often be equally disappointed, and find himself reduced to the dilemma of forfeiting all justness of painting in point of manners, or of seeing his piece ridiculed for want of being understood.

There are but two ways by which this dilemma can be avoided; Two means one is, in choosing a foreign story, to lay its foundation, as much of avoiding as possible, on universal manners, so that its leading features may this dilem- be independent of time, or place, intelligible, and interesting, to all. ma. This it is scarce possible to effect, by any other means than making love the basis of the fable, which, being circumscribed by no bounds of climate or education, if painted with the vivid tints of nature, makes (wherever the scene is laid) sometimes the most terrible, sometimes the most amiable, and at all times the most interesting picture of all the passions. The languid, metaphysical galantry of the times of chivalry, which proceeded more from the head than the heart, and consisted in saying every thing but what was natural, or the wanton amours of modern novels, which have as great a deficiency of sentimental refinement, as the other had a superfluity, are indeed both unfit for Tragedy; but, where a virtuous mind is held in bondage by this passion, and made the involuntary victim of its disquietudes, where the alternate paroxysms of rage, tenderness, and despair, like a torrent, bear every thing before them, and drive a noble character to deeds, at which, in his cooler moments, he would have shuddered; such a picture as this, I say, is the most natural, universal, and affecting which can be drawn, and the most proper to produce and promote the true tragic interest*.

The

* See Marmontel, *Poet. Fran. T. 2. p. 187.*—By this principle was the author of *Zoraida* guided—Induced to choose a foreign story from the idea (perhaps a false one) that it would have a greater appearance of originality, yet conscious of the defect of such a fable in point of interest, for the bulk of his audience, he resolved to make love the basis of his action, as being the most universal of all the passions; and that he might be able to render it

The other means to avoid this dilemma is, to chuse a domestic story. An invented, an historical, a foreign, or national subject, have indeed each their advantages, and disadvantages. An author who invents his subject, is in no danger of falsifying known characters; but, on the other hand, having no archetype to guide him, he will find the difficulty of supporting new characters so great, that Horace advises to choose known subjects:

Difficile est propriè communia dicere.

The great advantages of a domestic fable.

Add to this (which is of great consequence) that we come prepared to be interested in the fate of characters already known, and respected; whereas, if they are unknown, it must necessarily cost the poet some time, and labour, to make us take part in their fortune. Historical subjects, then, are both more easy, and interesting, than invented ones, and, *à fortiori*, national historical subjects most of all; for, whatever arguments prove in favour of historical subjects, prove doubly in respect of national ones: we are naturally prejudiced in behalf of these last, as every man is most interested in the events of his own country. But, what is still more to a writer's advantage, he is here in less danger of offending against the *Costumi*, as being more familiar to him, and at the same time stands a far greater chance of being intelligible to the bulk of his audience*. In short, a national, historical subject unites many essential advantages; and accordingly, it was the constant practice of the Greeks to exhibit domestic subjects; and, since Shakespeare's time, who led the way, it has been frequently adopted by our own writers. Indeed, when

more interesting by painting it in its highest energy, he determined to lay his scene in the East, where he knew that the warmest colouring he could give it would be within the pale of nature, and probability. By this, and the variety of incident of the action, he hoped to engage the affections of the uncultivated, and to merit farther the attention of the judicious by a strict observance of the *Costumi*. But it has been his fortune to be censured with severity, in those very points, where he hoped to escape at least, without blame, if not deserve praise. To instance only in three particulars, the violence of passion which appears in Almamon's character, the suddenness with which Selim falls in love, and the cause of revenge attributed to Osman. The first of these has been called boisterous and ruffian like, the second unnatural, and the third frivolous. But this is surely to talk the language of western not eastern manners. Who is there in the least conversant with the quick sensibility, the warm temper, the amorous character of the Asiatic nations, who do not know that with them to see and love, may love with ardor, is the impulse of a moment; that accusom'd, upon the slightest causes, to indulge every emotion which the prevailing passion excites in their breasts, they give vent to these emotions in expressions suitable to the warmth and acuteness of their feelings. Nor is the generosity of Selim's character more out of nature, as has been objected; for, nor to mention that the less civilized people are, to the greater heights do their virtues as well as vices rise; many instances of the reality of such a character among the Turks might be produced. In short, the taking away a female captive was not only perfectly in character for a young Eastern prince, but, as Selim, and Osman are drawn, the only offence the one could possibly commit, or the other probably resent. Nay, not only the *Iliad*, but the whole history of the East, proves that to similar causes have been owing the greater part of the revolutions, which have deluged the empires of Asia with blood.

* See Hurd's notes on the Art of Poetry, p. 242.

we consider the mixed audience of which our theatres are composed, the balance is so much in favour of national subjects, that these will be the poet's safest choice, notwithstanding the narrow circle in which it will necessarily confine him, and the air of imitation which it will probably throw over his performance. Two things only, it must be remembered, are to be carefully guarded against in the selection of domestic fables. One is not to falsify known characters, and events; for, in such subjects, it is impossible to be done without detection, and ridicule is sure to be the consequence. The other is not to choose a story too near, or too remote from the times in which we live. There are so many imperfections attendant on the noblest human actions, that something little, and mean, always surrounds recent events, which is sunk when objects are viewed at a distance, either of time, or place *. It is with human actions, as with natural bodies, beheld too near, all their little irregularities and asperities strike the eye, which, at a greater distance, are softened, or totally lost. The moon, though full of inequalities, appears to us a polished surface. But beyond a certain point of view, human actions, like natural bodies, become indistinct, and their grandeur or beauty is lost in the atmosphere which surrounds them.

However, whether characters are invented, historical, or national, Aristotle's last rule must be observed in all; and that is, they must be equal (*το ὅμοιον*), or, as Horace expresses it,

Fourth rule
for the conduct of
the manners.

— Servetur ad imum

Qualis ab incepto processerit, et sibi constet.

Now to sustain a character either invented, or historical, with truth, and propriety, to divest ourselves of ourselves, to paint nothing but what is natural to that character, and let nothing escape which is essential to the portrait, is so difficult that few have greatly succeeded in it. Homer, and Shakspeare, for the justness, as well as variety, of their characters stand unrivalled. Next to the disposition of the fable, this is the most difficult office of invention, the greatest excellence of a poet; and, wherever it appears, gives those, who are qualified to judge of it, the highest pleasure †.

Upon the whole, the writer who would give to manners all the effect in Tragedy of which they are capable, should banish allegorical characters, be very cautious in the use of supernatural ones, choose his human personages from such mixed characters as are naturally of an exalted virtuous disposition, but driven into crimes by passions noble in themselves and faulty only by excess; should place those characters in such situations as strongly excite pity or

Recapitulation of the
remarks
upon character.

* Marmontel says, in one of his moral tales, that Sylla's valet de chambre never thought him a great man; and Hurd observes that so many disparaging circumstances unavoidably adhere to recent deeds as in some measure to sink the noblest modern transactions to the level of ordinary life. Note on v. 286. of the Art of Poetry.

† Castelvetro in few words expresses the sum of what has been said, and gives the reason for it. Poiche i costumi si prendono per cagione della favola, et sono cagione dell' attione, si devono prendere tali, quali possono fare riuscire l'attione piu compassionevole, et piu spaventevole, et piu possibile; il che fara se i costumi della persona tragica faranno buoni, convenevoli, simili, eguali, verisimili, o necessari. Sposizione della Poet. d'Aristot. p. 178.

Of senti-
ment and
diction.

terror, observe not only the fixed and permanent, but local and changeable qualities of mankind, never lose sight of probability and unity in their formation, and above all take care to keep them in due subordination to his fable.

The next object of the dramatic poet's consideration, and of equal importance with the investigation of manners (if he means to be regarded in the closet) is the knowledge of sentiments adapted to each character, and a style fitted to express those sentiments with due energy. The conception of character may be compared to the skeleton of the body, the sentiments to the muscles, and flesh, and the style to the colour, likeness, and expression. If the muscles are distorted, or out of proportion, the colour, and expression, sickly, and languid, they will but deform, and disgrace that body, of which they were intended to present a full, and pleasing picture.

We have already said there are two species of characters, one of which is founded on the fixed, and permanent relations of mankind, the other upon the local customs of climate, education, and religion. To both these the dramatic poet, who would paint life justly, must adapt suitable sentiments and style; nor will this be sufficient unless he is careful at the same time to place them in situations, adapted to call forth the passions, furnish them with sentiments, and cloathe them in language, suited to the occasion. For it should never be forgotten that passion is the vital lamp, the Promethean fire of Tragedy, without which the statue, however beautiful, is but a statue still.

Nature of
dramatic
dialogue.

But farther, he must not only take care that the sentiments, and style, are adapted to each character, and the situation of that character, considered in itself, but remember to keep them within the bounds of truth, and nature, when brought into dialogue*. One of the essential qualities of dramatic dialogue is to be quick, and interrupted; for it ought always to be interesting to those who speak, and then, if in nature (unless restrained by modesty, fear, or respect) will be short, and broken. Nay, if it be very passionate, no motive often is of force to restrain the impatience natural to the human heart. As a proof of this, it is sufficient to look at all mankind when their minds are strongly agitated by any passion, and we shall soon see they will not suffer their dialogue to languish, or proceed uninterrupted through any detail. In general these episodes of dialogue, if

* There are three sorts of Dialogue, the philosophic, the pastoral, and dramatic.—The first has for its object a truth—the second a sentiment, or single situation—the third, a concatenated action. The philosophic dialogue, as it has truth for its object, so it admits all the extension which that truth demands. The pastoral, as it is the developping a sentiment, may be extended as far as that sentiment requires, but both are equally undramatic—the first, as it is too long, and wants pathos; the second, as it wants importance. It is detached, it leads to nothing; it begins, continues, and ends at pleasure. In short, it is motion without progression, which is totally opposite to every idea of the drama. A dramatic dialogue ought always to tend to its point, which is to forward the action, without turning to one side or the other. In an interesting situation, when the spectator is on tiptoe to know the event, it is as absurd to stop to say fine things (unless they are quite in nature) as it was for Atalanta to stop to take up the golden apples, which occasioned her losing the race.

one may so call them, arise from the original sterility of the subject. If that was so well planned and conducted that the dialogue, always pressing forward to a determinate point, should only serve to facilitate the progress of the action, every reply would be to the scene, what the scene is to the act, a fresh means either of implicating or unfolding the plot. But, when the original fable is thin and inartificial, there will of course be many places where the action must unavoidably stand still, and in this case it is necessary to fill up these voids with sentiments which do not promote the design, but are more adapted to the narration of epic poetry, than the animated scenes of Tragedy. It is indeed true that all eloquence is fundamentally the same—the only difference between that of the orator and poet being, that one is the concentrated spirit of the other. The importance of truth renders the auditor patient to the orator; but the fiction of the poet can attract only as it interests*: the eloquence of the latter, therefore, ought to be more rapid, more animated, more sustained, than the former. The poet makes his subject, the orator is made by it: the dry, languishing details which are pardonable in the one, are a reproach to the other; hence deliberative eloquence, though perfectly proper for oratory, and often a beauty in epic poetry, is generally very opposite to the animation of Tragedy, whose fire, like the rays of a concave mirror at its focus, should absorb all superfluous ornaments, as they melt or dissipate all surrounding objects†. This deliberative eloquence is one characteristic of the French stage, and the reason of it has been already explained. Even Dacier, though a Frenchman, allows that Corneille's dialogues are more in the nature of epic poetry than Tragedy, which is the reason why they languish in representation, as declamatory plays always do in effect, however their composition may do honour to their authors‡.

Declamation, however beautiful in the closet, improper for dramatic dialogue.

But

* Aristot. *ib.* x. 10.

† If deliberative eloquence can have any place in Tragedy it is in the monologue or soliloquy—for the monologue is but thinking aloud, and, where there is no one to interrupt our thoughts, they may proceed in a continued chain.—But neither for this reason is passion out of place in soliloquy; for when the soul is tortured by conflicting emotions, it is then most frequently that the overburdened mind vents itself in exclamations, and violent resolves. See Marmontel, *Poet. Fran.* ch. 11 & 12.

‡ Ben. Johnson's Cataline is a pointed instance of this kind of Tragedy, as Hurd has strongly proved (note on v. 131 of Horace's *Art of Poetry*) and what Dr. Johnson says of Comus may almost literally be applied to this whole species. "The discourse of the spirit is too long, an objection that may be made to almost all the following speeches: they have not the sprightliness of a dialogue animated by reciprocal contention, but seem rather declamations deliberately composed, and formally repeated, on a moral question. The auditor therefore listens as to a lecture, without passion, without anxiety." (*Prefaces to the English Poets*.—*Life of Milton*.)

In short, declamation, or the exertion of the poet, is only adapted to supply in the closet the want of gesticulation, or the exertion of the actor in representation, and therefore upon the stage is in great measure superfluous. There is a passage in Arnaud (*Discours prelim. au Drame de Comminges*, p. 33, et seq.) so much to this purpose, that I cannot forbear transcribing it, though rather long (as I believe the book is not much known) because it seems to me to point out the true art of writing for the stage in opposition

An affectation of studied sentiment, and uncommon turns of thought still more improper for dramatic dialogue.

But there is a worse fault in the sentiments, and style of Tragedy, than being declamatory, and that is, being loaded with studied antitheses, and epigrammatic points. Even in works where the use of what the French call le bel Esprit is allowed, he who is perpetually endeavouring to say something new, or uncommon, will ge-

opposition to the closet, at least it coincides perfectly with my ideas on the subject, as it shews how much the author and actor should unite to produce the genuine effect of Tragedy.

La Pantomime que les Grecs et les Romains avoient portée au plus haut degré de perfection, et que l'on peut appeller l'éloquence du corps, la langue première des passions, est au nombre de ces ressorts du pathétique, dédaignés de nos auteurs de théâtre. Il y a des attitudes, des gestes, des signes du sentiment, que la précision et la vérité mettent fort au-dessus de toutes les richesses de la poésie. Ce qu'on dit est si faible en raison de ce que l'on sent ! Qu'un seul regard, qu'un soupir ont quelquefois d'éloquence ! Que cet orateur connoissoit bien l'empire de la pantomime, lorsqu'il découvrit le sein de cette courtisane aux yeux des juges qui l'alloient condamner ! Dans une Tragédie de Balthazar, cette main imposante qui trace sur la muraille, en caractères de feu, l'arrêt de mort de ce prince, ne produiroit-elle pas un effet plus effrayant que tous les discours d'amplification de nous beaux esprits ? Les anciens se laissoient bien plus que nous, entraîner par les affections de l'ame ; ils recherchoient comme un plaisir tout ce qui pouvoit exciter leurs impressions et les entretenir. Ils aimoient l'appareil, la cérémonie ; ils étoient persuadés qu'il est un langage pour les yeux comme pour les oreilles. Des enfants, des vieillards prosternés aux pieds d'Oedipe ; un peuple entier portant à la main et sur la tête des rameaux et des bandelettes ; Jocaste offrant des guirlandes et de l'encens aux dieux domestiques ; Hécube les cheveux épars, couchée dans la poussière, pleurant ses enfants, son époux, sa fortune anéantie, accablée d'un sombre désespoir : voilà ce qui charmoit la Grece. Répandre sur le Drame le coloris de l'action, c'est l'effet heureux qui naît de la Pantomime. Racine s'en est servi dans son Athalie avec un succès qui auroit dû engager les autres écrivains dramatiques à l'imiter. Les Anglais ont su profiter de cette source de beautés théatrales. Macbeth après avoir poignardé chez lui Duncan, son roi et son parent, s'étoit emparé du trône d'Ecosse ; sa femme, livrée à tout le trouble qui suit le crime, est devenue somnambule : on la voit, dans la nuit, s'avancer sur la scene, les yeux fermés, dans un profond silence, imitant par ses gestes l'action de se laver les mains, comme si elle eût voulu effacer le sang qui les avoit souillées ; quel tableau terrible ! et qu'il renferme de sublimes vérités ! Dans la même piece le spectre de Banquo, que Macbeth a fait assassiner, vient s'asseoir dans un festin à la place de l'usurpateur ; ce fantôme affreux, tout sanglant, reparait par intervalle, et n'est aperçu que de Macbeth, dont l'épouvante nous est représentée d'un pinceau énergique. L'Ombre du pere d'Hamlet, avant que de prononcer un seul mot, se contente de faire plusieurs fois un signe du doigt à son fils, et s'élève autant de fois de la terre : c'est par ce geste si expressif, par ce silence ténébreux, que Shakespeare a su donner à son tableau toute la teinte tragique dont il étoit susceptible ; par-là il irrite la curiosité du spectateur, il échauffe l'intérêt, prépare l'ame aux transports des passions. La Pantomime, employée avec goût, est une des cordes majeures d'où résulte l'accord dramatique, quand elle est revêtue d'une versification mâle & soutenue.

But it should be remembered that the author, who writes with a view to gesticulation, lays himself much more at the mercy of the actor, than he who trusts to the intrinsic beauty of sentiment alone. For, unless the actor is in consonance with the writer, the harmony, of which Arnaud speaks, is lost, through the disunion of its component parts.

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nerally sacrifice nature, and propriety, at the shrine of vanity*. However, be that as it may, in works where it is the essential business to rouse, and interest the passions, it is necessary to speak their language, which never consists in refined, and uncommon turns of thought. Such sentiments may dazzle the mind, but will never move the heart, which is more affected by the language of the soul breathed without art, in a manner consonant to the situation of the speaker, than by all the brilliancy of studied eloquence. For according to Horace,

Si vis me flere, dolendum est
Primum ipsi tibi.

This affectation of refinement in sentiment, and language, is almost peculiar to the French stage. Of declamatory plays instances are frequent, on every theatre, antient, or modern; but, out of the French drama, I scarce know a writer, except Seneca, the leading feature of whose language is a studied display of uncommon turns of thought: yet how distinguishing a characteristic this has been of the tragic drama of our neighbours, all must be convinced who read Fenelon's criticisms on this subject, and the examples he has produced in his letter upon eloquence, published at the end of his dialogues upon the same subject†.

* Le bel esprit a le malheur d'affoiblir les grandes passions, ou il prétend orner, says Fenelon, Lettre sur l'Eloquence, p. 340. And Ricoboni pertinently asks—Est il vraisemblable qu'un héros dans les transports de la plus violente passion debite les sentimens de la metaphysique la plus raffinée? Cette prétendue beauté produit un effet absolument contraire à l'intention du poëme tragique. Dans le moment que la déplorable situation d'un héros vous touche le cœur, il sort de la bouche de ce héros furieux, désespéré, une maxime si élevée, ou une sentence si étrange, et si peu attendue, qu'elle fait diversion au sentiment du cœur, en attirant toute l'attention de l'esprit. (Dissertat ut supra). What Dacier says of Seneca, may be justly applied to all such kind of writing—Seneca fait très souvent parler ses personnages, les plus furieux, d'une manière qui fait d'abord sentir, qu'ils ont passé la nuit à méditer, et à préparer leur fureur. Note on v. 106, of Horace's Art of Poetry.

† Ricoboni accounts for it from the character of the nation. Les François (says he) naturellement pleins d'esprit, et de vivacité d'imagination, cultivent volontiers cette partie de la Tragedie que nous appellons *sentenza*, et souvent ils lui sacrifient toutes les autres; ils y sont encouragés par les applaudissemens qu'une belle maxime surprend toujours des spectateurs. On a vu même quelquefois réussir une Tragedie par le seul brillant des maximes, qui y sont débitées. Les auteurs sont trompés par ce succès, et ils ne s'aperçoivent pas qu'une pièce, qui n'a que ce mérite, n'a jamais une longue réputation. S'ils veulent assurer l'immortalité à leurs ouvrages, qu'ils s'appliquent à la construction de la fable, qu'elle soit par elle même, dénuée des ornemens du stile, capable de toucher, et d'intéresser le spectateur; qu'ils fassent alors usage de leur esprit en observant toujours les caractères, et les situations, ils seront sûrs de plaire éternellement. (Dissertat. ut supra). To this ought to be added (what we have before insisted upon) their adhering to the antients in the continuity of scene, and of course, in the simplicity of the fable, without their resources to fill up the void; except by making manners the leading feature of their drama, and placing their characters in such situations as expose them to the conflict of incompatible duties, which renders this play of sentiment, and all this contrivance of thought, almost inevitable.

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But if the French theatre, by too much cultivation, has been refined out of nature, it is no less true that the English stage, by being too little cultivated, has frequently presented nature in too negligent an undress. If one has too much of Guido's softness, the other has too much of Angelo's roughness: the perfection of the two, as painting shews it in Raphael, ought to be the object of every writer, but it is seldom attained; for, as Hurd observes (Hor. vol. I. p. 51, & vol. II. p. 87.) "No sooner has the negligence and simplicity of the early writers been polished, and improved, into true correctness, and elegance, but the next step is to a vicious affectation; the natural beauties of eloquence grow insipid, the public taste demands the seasoning of a more studied, and artificial expression, and the reader's languid appetite must be raised by the provocatives of an ambitious refinement. It is not enough to please, the writer must find means to strike and surprise. Hence the antithesis, the remote allusion, and every other mode of affected eloquence."

All false, and ambitious ornaments to be rejected.

In a word, not only all false, but even all ambitious ornaments, must be rejected and erased, if we hope to compose dramas which shall be worthy, in the words of Horace,

Linenda cedro, et levi servanda cupresso †.

Whether images are to be reckoned ambitious ornaments in the drama.

Whether images are to be reckoned ambitious ornaments in a Tragedy, has been long and frequently disputed, names of the greatest authority appearing on both sides the question.

Arguments against the use of images.

The opinion supported by the most numerous abettors, is, that images are generally out of nature in a Tragedy. The ornaments of diction, says Aristotle*, should be reserved for the weak places; those which contain either sentiment, or manners, have no need of them. A bright, luminous expression serves only to conceal these, by involving them in too much glare. What, it is said, can be added to the sublime of sentiment? Like light issuing from a centre, the more it is expanded, the more it is weakened. The *Qu'il mourut*, of Corneille, the *Medea superest*, of Seneca, the *Εὐ δε φασὶ καὶ ὀλέσσειν*, of Ajax, in Homer, the *What, all my little ones*, of Macduff, in Shakespeare, the *Let there be light* of Moses, cannot be increased by imagery: their sublimity consists in their conciseness, and simplicity, and to adorn them would be to deface them. It is useless, says Scaliger, when we would paint a Hercules, or a Venus, to adorn one with the armour of a soldier, or the other with a robe

† By false ornaments I mean such as are in themselves intrinsically out of nature, as described in this verse of Horace,

*Humanæ capiti cervicem pictor equinam
Jungere si velit*——

By ambitious ornaments I mean such as are perfectly in nature, but out of place, such would be the case of the writer who

Delphinus sylvis adpingit, fluctibus aprum.

The boar and the dolphin are both in nature; paint the boar in the woods, and the dolphin in the waves, and all will be just and proper. It is not enough therefore that the ornaments of a poem be themselves in nature, they must also be in place. The "*sed nunc non erat his locus*" should never be out of a writer's mind.

* *Ib. x. ad.*

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of festivity. But farther, the favourers of this opinion insist that images can have no place in the painting of passions, whether furious, or mournful. In the sublimer passions, say they, the more the soul is occupied with its object, the less does it look round it; the more rapid the emotion which seizes it, the more impatient is it of obstacles and details; the more fire and force the sentiment has which occupies it, the more does it subdue the imagination, and hinder its excursions. Nor have images more propriety, they urge, in the humble passions. The style of grief is simple and negligent*; the soul is so bowed, that it has no power to look around it for images to adorn its language, nor has it life enough to be pleased with them, if they offer themselves. When nature is to be represented in all her affecting simplicity, to cover her with a veil, whose richness makes it but the more impenetrable, is to hide the very beauty we are labouring to exhibit. Brilliant descriptions, and images, therefore, can have no place in passion: in the recital of the poet, indeed, they are beautiful; for that expression which is most natural for a person under the actual influence of any passion, would appear weak and languid in the poet recounting it, and that which would be a grace in the recital of the poet, would be too studied and brilliant in the actor. It is true, in all places where the actor is so much at his ease as to take the place of the poet (as in long recitals) the use of images is proper; but these recitals, as the bane of interest, ought to be banished Tragedy; and the other (viz. the narration of the poet) having no place on the stage, they conclude that images are to be excluded the drama. See *Marm. Poet. Fran.* tom. I. ch. 4. tom. II. ch. 11.

On the contrary, the opposite opinion is maintained by a critic of no less eminence than the bishop of Litchfield. It is from a mistaken notion of Horace's rule (says he) which directs, that tragic characters should express their sorrows in prosaic language, when involved in grief, that the maxim has been established of pure poetry having no place on the stage. Though every passion has a character, or turn of thinking, peculiar to itself, they all agree in this property, that they occupy the whole attention of the speaker, and are perpetually offering to his mind a set of images, suitable to his state, and expressive of it. In these the tragic character of every denomination loves to indulge, as we may see by looking no farther than on what passes in common life, where people, under the influence of any passion, are more eloquent, and have a greater quickness at allusion and imagery, than at other times; so that to take from the speaker this privilege of representing such pictures, is so far from consulting nature, that it is in effect to overlook, or reject, one of her plainest lessons. After this he goes on, for a dozen pages, to prove that poetry, pure poetry, whose essence consists in bold figures, and a lively imagery, is the proper language of passion; and then sums up the whole of his reasoning in the following words, for the use of the dramatic Poet:—"Man is so formed, that, whether he be in joy, or grief, in confidence, or despair, in plea-

* But, though negligent, not incorrect—one of which is often mistaken by young poets for the other. It is a neglect of ornaments, not of justness; correctness of expression being as necessary to poetry, as truth of perspective to painting. *Marmontel, Poet. Fran. T. 1. p. 125.*

"sure, or pain, in prosperity, or distress, in security, or danger, or torn and distracted by all the various modifications of love, hate, and fear; the imagination is incessantly presenting to the mind an infinite variety of images, or pictures, conformable to his situation: and these pictures receive their various colouring from the habits which his birth, and condition, his education, profession, and pursuits have induced. The representation of these is the poetry; and a just representation, in a great measure, the art of dramatic writing." (Hurd, note on ver. 94 of Horace's Art of Poetry.)

It may be urged also, in favour of this opinion, that poetry loves to personify every thing; its peculiar province being to strike the imagination, and interest the affections. Reduce the world to physical mechanism, and it has no longer any thing interesting for the heart; it is for this reason that poetry has animated all nature, and its language of course must be analogous to its object. The language which paints nothing is for the bulk of mankind unintelligible; but nothing except images can paint. Abstract ideas, indeterminate, and confused, in themselves, speak nothing to the imagination, while figures, cloathing a sentiment in a material veil, are at once a proof of its existence and its truth. As passion, therefore, delights in personification, and images are the chief means by which sentiments become capable of animation, images must be the language of passion. Another proof of this is, that nations, the farther they are removed from civilization, and the nearer they are to a state of nature, whether they burn in the torrid zone, or freeze in the polar circle, as they are more violent in their disposition, and subject to greater extremes of passion, so their language is more bold and figurative. Of this the Islandic odes, and the songs of Ossian, are no less strong proofs, than the poems of Persia, and Arabia. Images, therefore, are every where the language of passion and nature*. Nay, not only in uncultivated climes, and in poetic language, are figures, and images employed; among the most civilized nations, in the most grave, and serious concerns, we find them in constant use. All language, even the most scientific, is a tissue of images, taken from material objects, and applied to intellectual ones; and whoever turns over the works of Lord Bacon, will find that philosophy herself does not disdain the use of images, when they can be employed with truth, precision, and clearness.

Amid this diversity of opinions, perhaps we may compromise the matter, and not be very far from the truth, by steering a middle course between the two. We may allow then, that, to the sublime of sentiment, images are superfluous, which generally derives its effect from the greatness of the thought, joined to the preciseness and simplicity of the expression; its native grandeur giving it greater dignity than any amplification can bestow. In most other cases (unless, perhaps, we also except the extremity of grief and despair) images are the natural language of passion.

These arguments combined.

Images at least proper in a drama founded on eastern manners.

But, however the matter may be determined when Western manners are the subject of the scene, in the painting of Eastern manners images are not only in nature, but not to be dispensed with, if we

* See Jones's Asiatic Poetry, Essay I. and Marmontel. Poet. Fran. T. 1. p. 168.

would

would paint justly; for, not only in their poetry, and conversation, but in their history, they make use of such bold and animated figures, as we dare hardly ever use, but upon the strongest occasions, and this not by chance, but repeatedly, and constantly, which proves how little what is nature to one nation, in this respect, is so to another*.

The only thing a Dramatic Writer, whose fable is Eastern, has Rules for to consider is, to select his images with judgment, to take care the choice, they have a local propriety, contain allusions to the mythology and conduct customs of the Dramatis Personæ, are taken from surrounding objects, and belong to ideas familiar to those who speak†.

In a word, as the sentiments must be consonant to the character, The style whether general and universal, or national and local, so must the style must correspond to the sentiments; not only to those which express permanent and universal, but also changeable and local manners. It must not only be vehement, elegant, rich, abundant, simple, &c. according as the various shades of passion require, but must also be tinged with all the peculiarities of the clime where the scene is laid; for it is chiefly by these local peculiarities that national characters are distinguished and discriminated.

And as the style should correspond with the sentiments, so should the versification with both. According as they demand, the number of images must correspond with both.

* No one can doubt of this who is at the trouble of perusing the history of Nader Shah, translated into French by Jones the celebrated orientalist of Oxford, in which scarce a page can be found, where there are not passages more highly coloured, than the most luxuriant western poetry can boast. In the very first paragraph of the history we find the following sentences:—"Le trenchant cymètre acquiert son mérite de la bonté naturelle de sa trempe, et non de la mine d'où il a été tiré. Le diamant ne doit pas sa souveraineté sur toutes les pierres précieuses à la roche dans laquelle il fut formé, mais à son propre brillant: ainsi le grand Nader, cet élé du Tres-haut, cet objet des ces éternelles faveurs, dérive son incomparable gloire de la grandeur lancée de son ame. Il éleva même si haut sa puissance, que la royaume de Timur sembla caché dans le fourreau de son sabre, et que les dominations de Genghiz, et des Tartares, parurent suspendues comme des anneaux à la chaîne de sa souveraineté."—But this is nothing to what may be found in a hundred other places as the history proceeds. The fourteenth chapter of the first book opens thus:—"Le vingt-tizième de Regeb, le sultan des luminaires célestes se transporta dans la ville du Bélier. Les boutons à demi éclos des roses, semblables à des beaux adolescents, et revêtus du manteau printannier s'ébatoient dans les réduits de jardins, et sur les bords des ruisseaux. La tulipe, nouvelle épouse de la riante saison, et les arbuttes odoriférans s'épanouissoient et fleurissoient à l'envi dans les demeures des bosquets. Les mains adroites de la nature peignoient les jolies des roses sauvages et le jasmin, des couleurs les plus éclatantes. Le rossignol amoureux de la rose aiguïsoit l'épée de sa langue pour vaincre ses rivaux. La colombe éprise du cyprès gémissait tendrement sur les branches de cet arbre chéri, dont les feuilles sembloient s'acérer comme des poignards pour servir de garde à ses plaisirs."—No wonder, if they write thus in their histories, that they should esteem our poetry flat, cold, and prosaic, as it is well known they do.—See the same author's Asiatic poetry for proofs how different were the ideas of the Greeks, and Romans, the eastern world, and the ancient North of Europe, in respect of eloquence.

† These proprieties the author has aimed at preserving in the foregoing piece.

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bers should be, now rapid and sonorous, like a torrent rushing through a narrow channel; now (if the sense require it, though never through negligence, or want of design) broken and unequal, like the same torrent tumbling over rocks, now calm and majestic, like the same torrent spread out into a smooth expanse. But as, in a former publication, I have expressed my thoughts on English dramatic verse, and ventured to lay down some rules for its improvement, I shall only observe, without repeating what is there said, that the numbers of the foregoing Tragedy have been framed by those rules, and leave it to the reader to determine how far they are harmonious.

Summary of the whole discourse. To sum up the whole of what has been said; the first, and most essential end of Tragedy is, to represent moral distress*. As the representation of an affecting story is the only means of painting moral distress, hence the fable is, and ought to be, the first leading feature of Tragedy; but this is not all that is required to the perfection of this part of the drama. To secure it a lasting reputation, character, sentiment, and diction, must, like modulation to melody, support, increase, and confirm the interest of the fable, when the energy and vividness of its first impressions are blunted. For, as the most enchanting succession of sounds, unsustained by harmony, never fails, on frequent repetition, to satiate and disgust the very ear it at first enraptured; so the most pathetic story that ever was represented, unsupported by character, sentiment, and diction, will soon lose its influence over the heart, if not on the stage, at least in the closet. Not only all the parts of Tragedy then are required to its perfection, but their combination in just proportion and due subordination to each other; for then, and then only, does it attain its full and entire conquest over the head, and heart equally, then, and then only, does it produce that happy union of judgment, and invention, of whose emanations it may be truly said,

Hæc placuit semel, hæc decies repetita placebit †.

Conclusion. These are some of the principles which the author of *Zoraida* has formed, from study and observation, upon the subject of the Drama, and

* Physical distress affects but few, moral distress comes home to all. Let a poet paint a vessel labouring in the deep, and struggling with shipwreck, amid the horrors of a tempest, however animated his description may be, it will interest only those who have a lively and vigorous imagination; but let him pourtray the mutual endearments, the shrieks, the agonies of despair, of an affectionate husband and wife, or of fond and faithful lovers, about to perish in the same vessel, and the picture will agitate every feeling breast. Indeed (as Arnaud observes) Quelques gens du bel air, qui, sans le savoir, sont les esclaves de cette multitude ignorante qu'ils méprisent; des automates importants, pourroient d'abord rire: mais que l'en ait le secret de réveiller leur léthargie par les secousses de la terreur, de leur faire trouver dans leur ame dégoûtée et aride l'attrait de la mélancholie, une source de larmes; ils cessèrent bientôt de s'armer de leurs prétendu bons mots parasites, et céderont à la plus délicate des impressions, au plaisir que l'on goûte à sentir son cœur. Ib. p. 13.

† Comedies also, like Tragedies, are of different species, and have been divided into four principal ones, those of character, intrigue, wit, and sentiment. Ben Johnson may be brought as an example of the first kind, Mrs. Centlivre of the second, Congreve of the third, and several modern comedies, both French, and English, of the fourth, particularly those of Diderot

and by which he proposed to guide himself in the composition of his Piece. No one can have more respect for the efforts of native, unfettered genius than he has ; but, even in the fertile fields of imagination, the soil which is cultivated, will always produce, if not a greater, yet a richer harvest, than that which is left to the wild luxuriance of nature. This is still more true on the barren moors of criticism ; here the writer who, disdaining all aid, pretends to draw only from his own source, like a man shut out from society, and reduced to his own efforts, does indeed invent every thing for himself ; but though his performances may justly intitle him to the praise of ingenuity, yet both the tools he employs, and the effects they produce, will be infinitely inferior to the meanest of those who have an opportunity of profiting by the labour and skill of others who have preceded them. It was for this reason he endeavoured both to form and support his opinions concerning the drama, by those of the best writers on the subject ; though he was aware of the inconvenience attending the breaking the thread of the text by notes. He hopes, therefore, that what was truly owing to diffidence, and the consciousness how little weight the unsupported sentiments of an unknown, obscure writer like him would have, will not be imputed to the pedantry of quotation.

If, after this confession, he should still be told that his observations smell of the lamp, but that study, and rules, never yet either made, or improved, a writer, of which he is a fresh and lamentable proof, and that one inherent ray of genius is worth all the borrowed light of art, conscious how weak his small and slender target is to defend him from these shafts of criticism, he begs leave to shelter himself behind the ampler shield of Hurd, and Vida ; the former of whom thus wards off the menaced blow : " Exquisite art, and commanding genius, being the only two means of rising to superior literary excellence, in proportion as any age becomes noted for the one, it is constantly defamed, and the preference given to the other. During the growth of letters in any state, when a sublimity of sentiment, and strength of expression, make, as under these circumstances they always will, the characteristic of the times, the critic, disgusted with the rude workings of nature, affects to admire only the nicer finishings and proportions of art. When, let but the growing experience of a few years refine and perfect the public taste, and what was before traduced as rough-

derot and La Chaussée ; the latter of whom is the father of sentimental Comedy among the moderns. But it is not more essential to the perfection of Tragedy that its several parts should unite, and that in due proportion, and subordination, than it is to Comedy. In the latter, indeed, the order is different, for the exhibition of character being the essence of Comedy, manners should be its leading feature ; which plot, wit, and sentiment should so support, and assist, that the first may be just various enough to keep the attention alive, and give room for the developement of the characters, while the two latter should at the same time arise naturally from the situation of the dramatis personæ, and contribute equally to their clearness, precision, and pleasantry. But to unite all these in such a manner, as that each shall occupy its proper place, none encroach on the bounds of the other, and yet all be distinctly marked, and that within the bounds of five acts, is an excellence much easier to describe from an example, than to imitate.

"nefs and barbarity, becomes at once nerves, dignity, and force.
 "Then art is effeminacy, and judgment want of spirit. All now
 "is rapture and inspiration *." Thus the Oracles of Criticism pronounce; and thus sing the Muses:

*Infelix autem (quidam nam sæpe reperti)
 Viribus ipse suis temere qui sisus, et arti,
 Externæ quasi opis nihil indigus, abnegat, audax,
 Fida sequi veterum vestigia, dum sibi prædâ
 Temperat, heu! nimium, atque alienis parcere crevit
 Vana superstitio, Phœbi sine numine cura.
 Haud longum tales ideo lætantur, et ipsi
 Sæpe suis superant monumentis, illaudatique
 Extremum ante diem scetus flere caducos,
 Viventesque suæ viderunt funera famæ †.*

Should he farther be charged with having drawn up these few pages to support his own mode of writing; or should the direct opposite be urged, and he be triumphed over, as having by these observations sealed his own condemnation; in either case he might reply, were he disposed to take advantage of the criticisms which have been made upon *Zoraida*, that these very strictures are themselves a proof (if they are just) that the Piece in some measure possesses both the requisites which these pages are written to prove necessary to the perfection of Tragedy; for it surely is but fair to conclude, that a dramatic performance, which has been in one place censured as a rhapsody of situations, and in another as a cold, declamatory play, must contain both action, and sentiment: But well aware how little respect is due to an argument drawn from such decisions, and too intimately acquainted with the real defects of the Piece, to plume himself upon it, were it otherwise, its author owns he has not been able to fulfil his intentions, or satisfy even his own poor, imperfect ideas of the drama; and, if it will be any gratification to the rigour of criticism, freely confesses, in the words of *Arnaud* *, "*Qu'il eut fort souhaité en tirer un meilleur parti: mais on n'ignore point que dans tous les arts, il y a une distance infinie du talent de l'invention à celui de l'exécution; et personne n'est convaincu plus que lui de l'impuissance de mettre ses pensées en œuvre, lorsqu'on a le malheur de n'être point secondé par le génie.*"

* Hurd's note on v. 410 of *Horace's Art of Poetry*.

† *Vida Poet. lib. 3. v. 245.*

‡ *Arnaud. Discours prélimin. au drame de Cominges, p. 50.*



F I N I S.